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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

PETER KERRIGAN — TRADE UNIONS AND AMALGAMATION

SAM AARONOVITCH — SOCIOLOGY, CLASS AND POWER

MARIAN RAMELSON — THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT, 1864-1886

DISCUSSION:

HUGH WYPER — SHOP STEWARDS—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

DAVID CRAIG — ART AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

A. H. ESTERSON, IDRIS COX — AFRICAN SOCIALISM

JUDITH COHEN — ALIENATION UNDER SOCIALISM

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Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

THE Bank of England is the latest body to make its contribution to the question of the extent of the Overseas Holdings of British monopoly capitalism.

Its main theme appears to be that British monopoly capitalism is richer than one thinks. It has not only £1,002 million in gold and convertible company reserves, but has securities worth £385 million, mainly American, and has drawing rights in the International Monetary Fund to the extent of £876 million. Maybe the B.O.E. is hoping that these facts will impress foreign speculators if the Balance of Payments begins to wobble in the autumn.

Turning to the overseas investments of British monopoly capitalism the Bank of England warns us that "the total shown is therefore a substantial understatement". It goes on to repeat this at a later stage of its statement:

> "In considering the estimates shown, it should be borne in mind that the effect of the incompleteness or unavailability of statistics for several important items is undoubtedly to understate United Kingdom external assets more seriously than the corresponding external liabilities."

British monopoly capitalism's difficulties are real but there are times when they have been systematically exaggerated. This was particularly the case in the concluding months of the 1945-51 Labour Government when Big Business wanted to force a General Election.

Though understated, British private overseas investments are at least admitted to be worth the formidable sum of £8,000 million.

No less than £3,000 million of this is portfolio investments, the holdings of individuals and financial institutions and companies in overseas government and municipal loans and in the shares of foreign companies. The largest segment of this was in the hands of financial institutions—other than banks. Investment and unit trusts hold £719 million: insurance companies (on head office account) £356 million and private and public pension funds £97 million.

The holdings of individuals in overseas portfolio investments were around £800 million, which leaves around £1,000 million in the hands of companies outside of finance.

The statistics evidently do not tell us to what extent this formidable sum has been built up by "flights of capital" in the post-war period.

The largest overseas investments are those directly invested abroad by United Kingdom companies, and their branches and auxiliaries overseas. In 1962 it amounted to about £3,500 million—£1,800 million was invested in other sterling area countries, and £1,700 million in non-sterling countries. (It should not be forgotten that Canada although a member of the British Commonwealth is a non-sterling country.)

No Light from Oil

There has always been a mystery about the holdings of the oil companies but the Old Lady thinks that they are probably about £1,100 million. Only £300 million is invested in the sterling area. The other £800 million is outside.

Another dark horse is the United Kingdom insurance companies, which for some reason or other are reluctant to disclose where their overseas investments are. The United States official estimate is that £350 million is in that country. The Bank tells us that:

> "When it is considered that the United Kingdom insurance industry also operates extensively in other foreign countries, and throughout the Commonwealth it is clear that its direct investment stake abroad must constitute a very substantial United Kingdom long term overseas asset."

Well, why do not the comparatively few large companies of this important industry tell us exactly what the value of this asset is. Why cannot the Bank or the Exchequer ask the Companies?

It is well known that many British-owned securities in foreign countries were disposed of during the war and that a formidable export of capital must have taken place in order to rebuild assets to the immense sum of £8,000 million. Quite a lot of this sum was built up by ploughing back profits obtained in overseas countries. British investors did not subscribe the £1,100 capital in the oil industry out of their personal savings. In fact it would be interesting to learn how much was actually subscribed and how much

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represented tribute extracted from the people of the oil producing lands and subsequently ploughed back.

However, quite a lot of capital must also have been exported and it is this export which is the explanation of the fact that the British gold and currency reserves are now lower than they were in 1951 (when the Tories took power) both in money and in the purchasing power of that money.

Foreign Investment Here

However, there is now, as we pointed out recently, a formidable foreign investment in Britain, which now amounts to £2,835 million.

The direct investments of overseas capitalists in the United Kingdom in 1962 (excluding oil, insurance, and banking) were £1,400 million of which almost £1,000 million (£985 million to be exact) was from the United States.

In addition the American and European Oil Companies invested £700 million. So when you read about the new British industries of oil refining and petro-chemicals remember that they are far from being all British.

About £735 million of British stocks and shares are held by people abroad (about 80 per cent of this is held outside the sterling area).

We may well wonder whether the far seeing British finance capitalists foresaw two things which have knocked the British balance of payments askew in recent years. Namely the sudden collapse of shipping earnings and the growing amount of interest, profits and dividends which are being paid abroad on foreign investments in Britain.

In commenting on these figures the British investors seemed to place more confidence in investment abroad than in Britain. That explains quite a lot of the reasons for British monopoly capitalism's stagnation in recent years.

More on "African Socialism"

In our February issue we published an article by Idris Cox which exposed the fallacy behind the theory of "African socialism". Previous to this we had already noted in these columns that this theory was coming under attack by several African leaders and that it had, in fact, been rejected by Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, and Modibo Keita, the Presidents respectively of Ghana, Guinea and Mali.

In recent weeks there have been further indications that the most far-sighted African leaders are rejecting this "theory" and, instead, are coming out in favour of *scientific* socialism.

In Kenya, where one African journalist recently described "African socialism" as being more correctly "African capitalism", Mr. Ochola Makanyengo, the secretary of the Petroleum Workers' Union, made a statement on March 10th, welcoming the steps the new Zanzibar Government is taking towards "scientific socialism" and contrasting this with "so-called African democratic socialism".

In Uganda, the progressive journal, the *African Pilot,* has carried several articles on this topic. An article by "Assagi" (October 9th, 1963) emphasises that the imperialists themselves talk about "African socialism" in the hope that "by diverting people's minds from basic principles of scientific socialism" they will score a victory in the cold war. Another article on the same topic (February 8th, 1964) written by John Kakonge, the General Secretary of the Uganda People's Congress, the main national party, was significantly entitled "African Socialism—a Myth". He points out:

> "What is strikingly odd is that no single complete theory of the concept of African socialism exists whatsoever. Each individual advocate of African socialism has his own idea about it and gives a different meaning to this concept."

In a further article (February 15th, 1964), he writes:

> "Some advocates of African socialism clearly envisage the possibility of private capitalist enterprise existing under socialism. They think it possible to do away with exploitation of man by man while preserving private ownership of the means of production.
>
> "This, however, does not answer in full the legitimate question why we, who sincerely wish to build a socialist society through rapid economic development and are convinced that under socialism our economic development would be much faster than under capitalism, speak in favour of socialism but either engage in a search for some other kind of socialism or interpret socialism in such a way that socialist ideas become a veiled apology for the capitalist way of development.
>
> "The main reason is the one which might be described as the crippling effect of cold war propaganda and the desire on the part of the newly emergent countries not to get involved in the cold war. The Western countries oppose the former colonial countries taking the socialist line of development. The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to put the theory of scientific socialism into practice. The Soviet Union is still the chief practical example of this theory."

He ends by coming down firmly on the side of scientific socialism, stressing:

> "Scientific socialism does not imply that we

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should make the transition to socialism in faithful imitation of everything that has been done in the Soviet Union.

"To sum up, I feel that we have every prospect of building socialist societies in Africa which are economically, socially and culturally progressive by adopting the basic theory of scientific socialism to the form of our traditional society with no doubt substantial modifications to it, but without radical departure from the underlying spirit."

Marxism-Leninism, the ideas of scientific socialism, are undoubtedly making headway in Africa. For decades the colonialists successfully cut off the people of Africa from all contact with Marxist writings. Marxist books were banned and those found with them fined or imprisoned. All this is now ending. In the former British territories decrees of the previous colonial governments banning books are being rescinded, and the people are now free to read, study and discuss the Marxist classics, and to apply their lessons.

What's Wrong with Parliament?

The question "what's wrong with Parliament" has for years past troubled those most closely concerned with British Government. Certainly the prestige of Parliament has steadily sunk lower and lower. Bringing the faces and voices of M.P.s into millions of homes on the television screen has done little if anything to halt the decline of Parliament's prestige among the general public.

The popularly held conception that we are governed by Parliament is dealt a fairly substantial blow by the authors of the Penguin Special *What's Wrong With Parliament*,[1] Andrew Hill and Anthony Wichelow, who argue that the art of Government is the ability correctly to gauge how much the Cabinet can get away with in the House of Commons. They comment on how the Government of the day got away with the decision to proceed on the great issue of our time—the manufacture of nuclear weapons:

> "This was one of the most far-reaching decisions ever taken by a British Government: and it was taken by the then Government without Parliament being consulted in any way."

The Government

> "were able to embark on the manufacture of the bomb, in the full confidence that the House would allow them the money without knowing what it was to be used for. . . . Looking back one can only hold one's breath and marvel at the superb effrontery of the manoeuvre. One cannot though excuse a House which went on voting huge sums of money each year, ostensibly but vaguely on 'research', which could be and then were used on building the bomb and setting up the whole huge apparatus for its regular production."

The growth of the parties is frequently blamed for the futility of much of the debate in Parliament and the increase of Government behind closed doors. But it is the narrowing of the differences and growth of co-operation between them which is the real trouble. Members working together on Committees find there is a real will to come to agreed solutions. They go away on delegations together and on their return often issue joint statements. In addition there is the pernicious system of pairing whereby a Member arranges with a Member of the other party that they should both absent themselves from the House for a given period in order not to effect the Government's majority.

Upholders of these practices will no doubt argue that they are an essential part of the functioning of Government and Parliament. But this is only another way of saying that they are an essential part of ensuring that Parliament does not disturb the existing relation of class forces in Britain.

The great tragedy of our time is that the leaders of the Labour Party uphold these practices as enthusiastically as the Tories. The real answer to the question posed in the title is that there are no Communists in Parliament. If there were, there would certainly be a lot less agreement, but Parliamentary debates would have a great deal more to do with the real issues facing the British people and successive Governments would get away with very much less than they do at present.

Fate of the Lion

After hundreds of thousands of words in the national press, a brief statement in the film trade press marked a new chapter in the affairs of British Lion—which in its headline-hitting stage had appeared to the public to be, so the title of the company suggests, symbolic of British film-making. Indeed, the British Lion grouping genuinely has been the centre and the hope of independent British film production—though it is often useful to remind even people in the film production trade that this independence is only relative. On April 1st last, the managing director of the National Film Finance Corporation, issued the statement:

> "As previously arranged, contracts were exchanged yesterday between the National Film Finance Corporation and Sir Michael Balcon's Group, which therefore assumes effective control of British Lion as from today."

[1] Andrew Hill and Anthony Whichelow—*What's Wrong with Parliament?*—Penguin Books. 3s 6d.

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The Government's doctrinaire decision that British Lion should return to private enterprise —before being publicly controlled, the late, great Sir Alexander Korda had run it—has been pushed through; and now that it has happened, very few argue against a man of Sir Michael Balcon's experience and integrity being in charge. However, it is difficult to find anyone in the film trade, who thinks that any of the basic problems have been solved: the Rank and Associated British Cinema interests, the "duopoly", still control the commanding heights, so British Lion's films must get showings on the two cinema circuits, owned by Rank and A.B.C., if they are to be financially viable, and the need for doing a deal with American interests, in order to get back more of the money spent on the production, still remains. In his negotiations it seems that Sir Michael has not been unmindful of such considerations.

The public has seen hard bargaining going on over British Lion, and now further hard bargaining will be carried on at a different level—more quietly. Still left unsolved is the problem of considerably less people being prepared to go to the cinema today than in former years—a problem that concerns the independents and the "duopolists" alike.

As has often been explained in these notes, solutions are not being sought in trying to get vastly greater cinema attendances so much as in seeking other media for investment, some of them not strictly within the entertainment industry—TV (including Pay-TV), tenpin bowling, bingo, tourism, petrol pumps and automatic laundries. Before passing on to the latest experiments in these diverse fields, it should be noted that British Lion may well be able to play some strong cards, because of connections with Pay-TV.

Conditioned Reflexes

Mental illness is, as we know, a vast problem in the modern world, the cause of an enormous amount of individual suffering and social waste. And it would probably be agreed by all who are honest about it that, in this country at any rate, the methods of treatment of individual cases remain largely "empirical"—that is to say, the doctors and psychiatrists concerned go more by methods of trial and error based on experience than by any consistent body of theory. Many psychiatrists tend to take a bit from Sigmund Freud, a bit from Ivan Pavlov, and (we hope) a lot from clinical experience and common sense.

In the field of theory, there are in fact two completely divergent approaches—that of Freud, which postulates purely mental factors, most of them "unconscious" and, therefore, not open to direct observation; and that of Pavlov, which recognises only material factors discoverable in the field of physiology.

Pavlov considered that the "conditioned reflex" was the key to understanding the entire working of the nervous system in animals, and, therefore, their behaviour. In his later life, he sought to extend this conception to the understanding of the workings of the human brain and human behaviour—including the disorders of the nervous system manifested in mental illness.

These questions of theory are of no mere academic interest. There is plenty of opportunity to learn what Freud said, but not so much for Pavlov. Much to be welcomed, therefore, is the republication of an English edition of his *Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes,* in two volumes, by Lawrence and Wishart. The first volume contains the basic material on conditioned reflexes, the second Pavlov's exploration in the field of human behaviour and mental illness.

The most formidable thing about these volumes is their price—three guineas. As for readability, Pavlov's pioneering work is eminently readable for the layman—just like that earlier scientific classic, Darwin's *Origin of Species.* If you cannot afford to buy them, these volumes are well worth putting on a library list.

Communist History Group

The Communist Party's History Group has just issued a special Shakespeare number of its quarterly *Our History,* in which A. L. Morton discusses *Shakespeare's Idea of History.*[2] Morton, who is Chairman of the Group and a well-known Marxist historian whose work frequently appears in this journal, has written one of the most pleasing and interesting essays that has appeared among the material produced for the celebrations.

The consistent work of the History Group is shown by the fact that this essay appears in No. 33, which means that *Our History* has now been appearing regularly for over eight years. Each number is devoted to a single essay and the range has been wide—from *Songs of the Labour Movement* and the *General Strike in the North East* to the *World of Homer.* The Group publishes also a *Select Bibliography of the British Labour Movement* and is about to issue a third and revised edition of its successful *Bibliography of Historical Writing in the Light of Marxism* which has been going steadily for about ten years.

A big feature of the Group's work is the or-

[2] A. L. Morton—*Shakespeare's Idea of History, Our History No.* 33, 1s. 3d.

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ganisation of historical discussions and it is now planning one on a really ambitious scale. This is to be a weekend seminar on the 1930's, at which a serious attempt will be made to assess the decade which immediately preceded Hitler's war.

A topic that is also up for discussion is history textbooks and indeed all the problems connected with the teaching of history. For this it needs to bring together more teachers and others with first-hand knowledge of the subject, and it would be glad to hear from all who are interested.

Membership of the Group is not confined to historians. It is open to all Marxists who are interested, whether professionally, as teachers or as readers—and who are prepared to pay 10s. a year for the privilege (which includes four issues of *Our History* post free).[3]

Yahoos

"The yahoos appear to be the most unteachable of animals . . . they are cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful . . . of a cowardly spirit, and by consequence insolent, abject and cruel."

Thus Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. And this is the text taken by Mike Newberry for a most informed, biting indictment of contemporary American McCarthyism and fascism, an exposé of the muddy tribe of inciters to racialism and war.[4]

The author was first moved to write this book in the late fifties when a number of young hooligans were arrested for scribbling swastikas and desecrating Jewish cemeteries. In their pockets were found packets of neo-Nazi leaflets.

Who was behind this racialist, reactionary, propaganda that breathed hatred and violence? The author set out to investigate. He writes:

> "These declining years of the McCarthy decade, when the Senator was himself dead and buried, witnessed the quiet and oh-so-headline-shy building of the right-wing as we know it today. In those years the 'lunatic right' and the 'respectable right' coexisted side by side. . . . Birch Society, Liberty Lobby, Americans for Constitutional Action, Christian Crusade and Christian Anti-Communist Crusade were unknown to the public and the Goldwater-booming. Young Americans for Freedom had not yet been born. . . ."

So he began to investigate, personally and thoroughly—and the result is in the true tradition of radical exposures of which there have been so many good examples from courageous progressives in the United States.

Useful, too, is the proof once again of how those who parade anti-communism end up attacking every form of socialist, liberal and democrat.

The Wife of the Prisoner

Lawrence and Wishart have just published, at 18s., a new novel by Vera Leff, *The Wife of the Prisoner*, dedicated to Betty Ambatielos. Its theme is based on her long struggle for the release of her husband.

The country where the husband in the novel is imprisoned is an imaginary one. And the wife belongs to no political party and is, in fact, quite "non-political". But the wife's lack of politics is the means used by Vera Leff to construct a novel with a very convincing political message. No one makes political speeches, but the girl gradually comes to realise what her husband's imprisonment is all about, and what she is up against.

The publication of this novel coincides with the release of Toni Ambatielos. But the story it tells, and the message it contains, are strong reminders of the fight that still goes on for all the others still behind bars in many parts of the world.

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[3] The Secretary (T. Ainley, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2) will send information material to all who write in to ask for it.

[4] Mike Newberry—*The Yahoos*—Marzani and Munsell, New York, $4.50.

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Trade Unions and Amalgamation

Peter Kerrigan

THE 1962 T.U.C. at Blackpool passed the following resolution:

> "Congress agrees that it is time the British trade union movement adapted its structure to modern conditions. It instructs the General Council to examine and report to the 1963 Congress on the possibility of reorganising the structure of both the T.U.C. and the British trade union movement with a view to making it better fitted to meet modern conditions."

"Modern conditions" mean, of course, the enormous changes in techniques and methods of production, including mass production and automation, which have altered the structure and interconnections of industries since the days when many of the unions were formed.

The mover, Ron Smith of the Post Office Workers, said correctly, "This is a subject which we have discussed many times in the history of the British trade union movement."

The Purpose of Trade Unionism

In accepting the motion George Woodcock, General Secretary of the T.U.C. said:

> "Structure, particularly in the trade union movement, is a function of purpose. We expect that we shall first of all in our inquiries, inquire into trade union purpose and policy, and ask ourselves, 'What are we here for?' When we know what we are here for, then we can talk about the kind of structure that will enable us to do what we are here for."

Our Party Congress preparations had already started when Woodcock made these points, and, at the 1963 Congress in April, we did not need to query what was the purpose of trade unionism in Britain in the 1960's. Our Congress Resolution put it in this way:

> "The progressive conception is that the trade unions are instruments of working class strength for use in the economic and political struggle and that they should preserve their independence from all forms of state interference, class collaboration and entangling alliances with the employers. While battling for every possible gain from capitalism, progressive trade unionists see the unions as important levers for the achievement of working class power and the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism."

Against that background we went on to set out what we considered should be trade union aims. We then dealt with Federation, Confederation and Amalgamation, as well as the democratic structure and control of the unions.

At the T.U.C. 1963

At the 1963 T.U.C. held in September at the Dome, Brighton, George Woodcock made an interim report on the steps taken by the General Council to carry out the instructions laid down in the 1962 resolution.

It was a disappointing effort. He said that "this is a report of the progress we have made, though perhaps not the progress that I myself might like to have made this year". Coming to the essence of the General Council line, he continued: "I suppose, having said that we have no theory of trade unionism, it would nevertheless be possible perhaps to qualify that by saying . . . we have come (and this, I think, Congress must understand because this will be our final report) firmly to the conclusion that diversity of structure—that is, unions of different size, of different shape, of different structure—is a characteristic of British trade unionism and always will be."

This rather negative approach was not to the liking of Congress. Leo McGree (Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers) protested:

> "The General Council have never hesitated to offer advice, sometimes of the most detailed character to other organisations. It offers advice to the Government, and even to society in general as to how they should organise themselves. It offers to the Government and the employers advice as to how the National Economic Development Council should be organised, but it shrinks from the important task of advising the trade union movement how it should reorganise itself.

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"Now we cannot have a situation where the General Council is prepared to reorganise every section of society but not itself."

He was followed by Bob Edwards, M.P., of the Chemical Workers: "I feel that the speech of the General Secretary, with all due respect was a very pessimistic speech indeed." He ended his criticism by saying: "I am surprised at the pessimism of his speech and I hope the final report will not reflect the speech of the General Secretary today."

Some Progress

Despite the weak-kneed approach of the General Council some progress has been registered in streamlining the trade union structure.

The process of amalgamation between the Boilermakers, Blacksmiths and Shipwrights has been accomplished. The new joint rule book has been issued and, in October 1963, Ted Hill took over as President of the new amalgamation, over 130,000 strong. It should however be noted that the three constituent unions remain separately affiliated to the T.U.C.

In the Engineering industry, discussions have been going on for some time between the A.E.U., the Draughtsmen and the Foundry workers. Most progress has been made with the Draughtsmen, who in turn have formulated a working agreement with the 10,000-strong Society of Technical Civil Servants. So far the A.E.U. and DATA have agreed on closer working exchange of representatives and information as a first step.

In February 1963, the A.E.U., Foundry Workers, National Society of Metal Mechanics and National Union of Scalemakers discussed A.E.U. proposals on phased steps to amalgamation. This has continued and some progress is reported particularly with the Foundry Workers.

Ten of the smaller unions in the Engineering industry met at the end of November 1963 to discuss closer working and a further meeting was held early in 1964 at which a small sub-committee was set up. Following the successful amalgamation of the Coppersmiths with the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers talks are now proceeding with the Birmingham Sheet Metal Workers Society.

In Print, the National Graphical Association has come into existence through the amalgamation of the Typographical Association with 60,000 members and the London Typographical Society with 20,000. Further amalgamation talks are going on in this industry which is faced with increasing problems by the growth of monopolies.

In Building, 1963 saw the finalisation of the amalgamation between the English and Scottish Painters Societies.

Although discussions on amalgamation are going on among unions in The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, it is not true, contrary to Press reports, that eight of the unions have agreed in principle to forming a 200,000 strong Building union. Proposals have been circulated but they have not yet been endorsed by the unions concerned.

Considerable press publicity has been given to the discussions between the biggest union in Britain, the 1,400,000 strong Transport and General Workers and the 800,000 strong Municipal Workers, both of whose memberships reach out into practically every industry in the land. There is little indication of much progress but both unions are engaged in discussions on amalgamation with smaller unions which have members in the same spheres. For example, the amalgamation of the Chemical Workers with the Municipal Workers is almost completed.

Other Discussions

Discussions have been going on for some time between the Transport and General Workers Union and the Tobacco Workers which organises the majority of workers in the industry. The Transport and General Workers have some members in England and the vast majority of workers who are engaged in tobacco manufacture in Northern Ireland. Some time ago Frank Cousins met the Executive of the Scottish Horse and Motormen whose 20,000 workers are mainly in road commercial transport in Scotland.

It is significant that the amalgamation proposals of the T. & G.W.U. have run into difficulties in both cases because of the rule which bans Communist Party members from holding office in the T. & G.W.U. This can affect negotiations between the T. & G.W.U. and other unions.

Another sphere where some progress can be reported is in the Entertainment Industry. The discussions between the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees and the Association of Broadcasting Staff has reached a stage where amalgamation could be accomplished by the end of this year. Talks are also taking place between the N.A.T.K.E. and the Association of Cinema and Television Technicians, whose annual Conference in March passed a resolution for "investigating the desirability of amalgamation with other trade unions operating within the Entertainment Industry". Actors Equity and the Variety Artists Federation should also achieve unity soon.

Among non-manual workers talks between the Draughtsmen, The Association of Supervisory Staffs and Technicians, and the Association of Scientific Workers, who initiated the move, made

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no progress. This was principally because the Scientific Workers, who proposed closer working, specifically ruled out amalgamation. In the circumstances the other unions felt it was difficult to suggest more than could be got through the existing joint consultative Committee of Staff Unions.

Efforts are being made finally to achieve one union for Insurance Workers and Bank Employees. The Clerical and Administrative Workers Union wants the Insurance Workers and the National Union of Bank Employees to merge with them. However, the Municipal Workers would prefer to have the Clerical Workers join up with them.

At the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union annual Conference at Easter, two resolutions on amalgamation were discussed. The first sought to instruct the E.C. "to open negotiations with other staff unions organising in industries in which this union also organises, with a view to seeking rational amalgamations likely to secure the better use of union resources". This was referred to the Executive. The second one, which was defeated, supported the T.U.C. in its efforts to "formulate vertical and horizontal forms of T.U. structure that unite manual and non-manual workers . . .".

T.U.C. Proposals

U.S.D.A.W. in addition to discussions with the Bakers Union and the National Union of Co-operative Officials (The Co-operative Insurance Agents are already inside U.S.D.A.W.) have been approached by the N.U.G. & M.W. on the questions of spheres of influence. If these talks and those between the Municipal Workers and the Transport Workers Union made real progress then questions of transfer of membership and amalgamation could become important, always provided the members concerned were convinced of the correctness of the proposals and agreed with them.

In February 1964, nearly eighteen months after Congress had passed the Union of Post Office Workers' resolution and following consideration of replies from affiliated unions, the T.U.C. Finance and General Purposes Committee drew up a list of unions to be approached on the issue of amalgamation. These were based on the industrial groups as set out in the T.U.C.'s report although the General Council has been at great pains to emphasise that it does not think one union for each industry is either practicable or the best thing to aim for in this country.

It is regrettable that when the T.U.C. made its suggestion for a joint meeting of the three unions in the Railway industry the A.S.L.E. & F. officials replied that they saw no purpose in attending in view of the decisions of their Annual Conference, although they did say they would submit the T.U.C. proposals to the next meeting of their Executive. This is an industry where the progressives will need to step up the struggle to end the deep-seated hostility which has lasted so long.

About a week before Easter, the General Council convened a meeting of Woodworking unions for preliminary discussions on amalgamation. Among those attending were the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (A.S.W.), National Union of Furnishing Trades Operatives (N.U.F.T.O.), Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists, French Polishers Society and Packing Case Makers. No decisions were arrived at but "in principle" amalgamation was welcomed by most of the unions participating.

Just before Easter the General Council circularised the General Secretaries of all affiliated unions indicating that they would like to discuss with certain groups of unions possible improvements in their organisational arrangements. They listed these groups in an attached document emphasising that the lists were not intended to be exclusive.

There were 17 groups in the list although two —Cotton Textiles and Food and Retail Distribution—were sub-divided. The list included three major Transport groupings, i.e. Rails, Other Transport, and International Transport (which embraced Seamen and Air Line Officers and Pilots). Building was also given two separate groups. In very rough outline, however, the groupings approximate to industries.

Too Slow

Two things stand out from this brief and necessarily incomplete report.

Although some progress has been made, the process is proceeding far too slowly. Secondly, the General Council itself could and should be driving forward much more energetically on this most vital issue. Of course, when one looks at the way they are evading the question of reorganising the existing industrial groupings and the method of electing members of the General Council this is perhaps not surprising.

Nevertheless, it is still wrong and requires to be remedied. It is also important to note that the General Council gives no indication beyond trying to arrange meetings, that it is concerned to make any suggestions to the unions which would help ensure that new unions emerging, would be more democratic and better fighting instruments

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of the workers to face conflicts with the powerful capitalist monopolies of today.

On the contrary, if we consider the service to affiliated unions which it has recently taken under its own direct control, namely its educational programme, the content and purpose has the opposite design.

The content of the training given to shop stewards is one example. At the 1963 T.U.C., shop stewards of the A.E.U. and Boilermakers as well as the Assistant Secretary of the Furniture Trade Operatives, Jock Shanley, strongly criticised this fact and attacked the proposal that where employers were asked to release shop stewards with pay the employers should be consulted about the syllabus. Now in Fords and other factories such courses are being started on just this basis. There has been in the B.M.C. in Birmingham and elsewhere a healthy reaction against these policies, but the right wing in conjunction with the employers are pushing ahead. As our Congress resolution stated:

> "The right wing sees the unions as bodies whose main aim should be to discipline the workers and shop stewards, and induce them to work more efficiently in the production process, i.e. they see the unions in effect as a branch of capitalist management."

For this reason we need to re-emphasise the importance of our conception of the trade unions which I quoted at the beginning of this article.

A Progressive Policy Needed

Our Congress set out clearly where we stood on wages policy against the so-called "guiding light" and Government interference with collective bargaining for higher wages and the shorter working week. We charted a policy on fringe benefits, automation, unemployment and the fight for the right to a job, set out a six-point programme for the youth and a programme for the women. We further showed the importance of the unions carrying on a political campaign for the defeat of Tory policy and the end of Tory rule.

In the immediate period of a General Election it is important to stress this point and to remember the decisive role of the unions in the struggle to move British foreign policy in the direction of peace, friendship and trade between all nations.

In order to make a reality of a policy such as we have outlined we must build more powerful unions. At the same time the more we understand and energetically struggle for the policy the easier becomes our task of transforming the existing trade union organisation into the powerful fighting instrument which is demanded today. Bearing this in mind, considering it against the background of present-day problems and the rate of progress on amalgamation which I have earlier indicated, what are the next important steps?

The Next Steps

I cannot do better than repeat what we said on this at Congress:

> "An increase of unity at the workshop level and of the federations should prepare the ground for the reduction in the number of unions in the various industries, through amalgamation on a democratic basis. In all amalgamations it is necessary to preserve the maximum trade union democracy, and to provide adequate expression for all trade interests within the union. The following appear to be necessary:
>
> (a) Every encouragement should be given to the building up of strong shop stewards' organisation as the workshop basis of the amalgamated union.
>
> (b) Every possible step should be taken to see that Branches meet regularly. District Committees should be given the responsibility of assisting when necessary to secure this.
>
> (c) Branch and District Committees should be elected annually, and there should be a regular system of reporting decisions.
>
> (d) Youth sections and conferences should be developed.
>
> (e) The national executive and full-time officials should be periodically elected.
>
> (f) The supreme authority of the union should be an annual or biennial elected conference.
>
> (g) The electoral machinery of the union must contain adequate safeguards against malpractices. Voting should be on the basis of personal balloting at the workshop or the branch level, and should be under careful supervision. Practices such as a handful of branch members or the branch committees casting the vote of the entire membership (a widespread abuse) should be abandoned. Details of branch voting should be available to the membership, as a check, as soon as possible after an election.
>
> (h) Entry into the union should be speedy and simple.
>
> (i) There should be no bans of a political or religious character on members standing for office. The more such measures of democratic reform are operated in all existing unions the stronger they will be. Such developments will help forward the movement for amalgamation."

The Amalgamations Bill

Incidentally, one obstacle to amalgamation against which we came out at Congress has been removed. Parliament has passed a law which ends the old position that stated not less than 50 per cent of the members must vote and of the votes

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cast a majority of not less than 20 per cent must be in favour. Now the 20 per cent majority clause is ended and a simple majority will be sufficient. This is the effect of the Trade Union (Amalgamations) Bill, a Tory Private Members' measure which became law on March 26th, 1964.

New regulations laying down amalgamation procedures are to be discussed between the trade unions and the Minister of Labour; when these are agreed, the date for the operation of the Act will be announced. Each member of any union concerned will have to be given a notice explaining the proposed merger before voting takes place. Individual members are also to be given the right to complain to the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies against alleged irregularities in the voting.

An Urgent Matter

How important this change is can be gauged from one recent experience. In the Ballot for amalgamation among a number of unions in Print they failed by only 200 votes to get the necessary two-thirds majority vote to make amalgamation legally possible. That was despite what anyone would agree was a decisive majority in favour.

It is necessary to stress the urgency of the effort for which we are calling. Monopoly capitalism is on the offensive. Its instrument is the Tory Government.

Recently the Law Lords of the House of Lords reversed a decision of the Court of Appeal in the Rookes v. Barnard case and decided that trade union officials who had by threat of a strike forced B.O.A.C. to dismiss a non-unionist were liable for damages. According to legal interpretation this judgment sets the trade unions back to before the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, and could be interpreted to make many types of strike illegal or liable to involve the unions in heavy damages.

Naturally we must fight to ensure that legislation is speedily passed to restore the position of the unions to what it was before this judgment. We do not want any Courts of Enquiry into trade union law whether by a Tory or a Labour Government. In the meantime it is absolutely necessary not to permit this legal decision to weaken our union organisation, nor our readiness, when the occasion demands it, to act speedily and with the utmost resolution.

To sum up, we are confident, as our resolution declared, that:

> "The unity of Communist trade union members with other militants will win the majority of British trade unionists for a policy of increasing trade union strength, safeguarding and expanding trade union democracy, winning the maximum concessions from the monopolists and seeking to develop a broad movement of the British people to force the resignation of the Tory Government, as a step towards destroying monopoly power altogether, through the advance to socialism. This is the only policy which points, to the unions and the mass of the British people, a coherent way forward to socialism and peace—the hopes of mankind."

Sociology, Class and Power

Sam Aaronovitch

We print below an edited and shortened version of the transcript of Sam Aaronovitch's lecture and reply to discussion delivered during the Challenge of Marxism Week *last November.*

IN 1962 Penguins published *Marx on Economics*, a selection of Marx's own writings; in 1963 they published *Marx's Selected Writings on Sociology & Social Philosophy*, as well as edited extracts by C. Wright-Mills called *The Marxists*; and a book by Carew Hunt on *The Theory and Practice of Communism*. It seems that in the 1960's Marxism had arrived in this country!

In the volume of Marx's writings on Sociology and Social Philosophy, the editors, Messrs. Bottomore & Rubel have an introduction in which they embrace Marx with such great warmth that it would be more accurate to say that they devour him. They write as follows:

> "A great deal of Marx's work is a permanent acquisition of sociological thought: the definition of the field of study, the analysis of the economic structure and its relations with other parts of the social structure, the theory of social classes, and the theory of ideology."

But, they write, "this incorporation of Marx's ideals entails the disappearance of a Marxist so-

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ciology". (A very Marxist touch by the way):

> "Modern sociology is not the sociology of Marx, any more than it is the sociology of Durkheim, or Weber, or Hobhouse. It is a science which has advanced some way towards freeing itself from the various philosophical systems in which it originated and with which its founders were still embroiled."

Social Change

I think there is some truth in the argument that we are "all Marxists now", and that so many are "Marxists" that nobody quite knows how to distinguish the Marxists from the non-Marxists. But is it true that modern sociology is some powerful digestive system which has somehow extracted all the nutriment of Marxism and excreted the rest? In fact sociology is a battlefield and a large part of it is concerned either directly with the refutation of Marxism, or with dodging (sometimes by a descent into the purely trivial) the real issues raised by Marx.

It is true that there is serious sociological work on the structure and character of society being done by sociologists, and that a great deal of this, whether acknowledged by those who do it or not, draws on many fruitful Marxist ideas. However, as Marxists our only interest is to put forward our ideas to be tested in the same way as in any other branch of the social sciences.

Now it does seem to me that of Marx's ideas, two have had a very special impact on the students of society: historical materialism and Marxist political economy.

In historical materialism the Marxist approach has been to define a given social system by its mode of production, that is to say by regarding it as a given combination of the productive forces of society and the relations into which men enter in using or operating these productive forces. Moreover, the study of historical change is for us essentially a study of the way in which one mode of production is replaced by another. For the Marxists therefore, history is not an arbitrary process, but can be studied as a process subject to laws which one can analyse and use.

In the introduction I quoted to Marx's writings on sociology, Bottomore and Rubel admit that most sociology has neglected the study of social change, and of social revolution, yet it is precisely this that Marxist sociology has placed in the forefront.

Political Economy

The other aspect is Marxist political economy. Everyone can recognise its fruitfulness in the study of society, because what Marx did after all was to argue and demonstrate that behind the relationship of commodities there existed a relationship between people, and that if one were seeking to distinguish the most important characteristic affecting the people engaged in society and in producing the means of life, you would single out their relation to the means of production. You would ask the simple questions: Who owns the means of producing wealth and who works for those who own the means of producing wealth? In our view this would be the main basis for defining the class structure of say a capitalist society; it would be our approach to the whole concept of exploitation, which for us is not a vague or moral category, but a scientific category arising from the class structure of modern capitalist society; and that this concept of class structure and of exploitation, arising from the nature of our society, gives the objective basis, for classes and for class struggle.

Now this represents, as C. Wright-Mills recognised, a unified conception of the development of society as a whole, of enormous power and at the same time of a very revolutionary quality. It is not surprising, therefore, that while some have learnt from it, others have also been anxious to destroy it, either as a whole, or to attack each part separately, or detach one part from the other; and sometimes to treat Marx in effect as a schizophrenic: a brilliant sociologist who unfortunately did not know what he was talking about in political economy, or an outstanding economist who unfortunately was ignorant of the real nature of society!

This becomes clear when you come to one of the central concepts of Marxism in sociology, namely that of class. Let me approach this question by looking down, so to speak, on the class structure of a society like our own, and suggest that we might view it from three particular aspects.

Conception of Class

First of all the aspect of the relationship of groups of people to the means of production. You would then have on this basis the capitalist class, as the class that owns the means of production; the working-class representing all those who are the non-owners of the means of production, and must work for those who own them; and then what we have normally called the petty bourgeoisie, namely those who are the petty producers and peasantry, the owners of their own means of production which they operate for themselves. This would be one way, and looking at it from that standpoint we could legitimately argue that class structure in modern society has in fact polarised very considerably indeed. That is to say that the petty bourgeoisie in that sense, the *old*

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middle-class as some thought of it, is on the road to disappearance in the most advanced capitalist societies.

Consider, however, two further ways of looking at class structure. The second is in relation to what we Marxist economists call the production of surplus value; that is, the surplus which is over and above that returned to the producers of wealth in the shape of wages and salaries. I am not thinking of the production of surplus value from the standpoint of the capitalist who employs people to make a profit, but in the narrower sense, namely, those who are directly concerned with the transformation of the materials of nature, turning them into products useful or necessary for society to meet human needs, whether they are manual or mental workers.

Looking at it even from that narrow standpoint, the largest group of occupied people are productive workers. But that leaves the rest as people who, in fact, live on that surplus product, and they in turn separate out roughly into two categories. (There are many other categories, but I will distinguish two.) There are those who live parasitically on that surplus product, and those who live usefully on that surplus product (university teachers, lecturers, artists, doctors and other similar categories).

Sources of Income

Here again, viewing society from that aspect, one notes the transformation of the old free professions into salaried employees of one form or another. But it is a useful distinction to make just the same. It helps to avoid the illusion that if the number of betting shops in Britain multiplies, the national wealth has equally multiplied as a result!

It also spotlights for us the particular position of the productive workers. It assigns them a role in the economy and, I think, also a role in the movement of society which is rather distinct. It shows, looking at what has happened in society, that such an enormous increase has taken place in the production of that surplus that there is room for a very considerable growth of the non-productive sections of society. So that is a second way of looking at the social structure of a capitalist society.

The third aspect is not in relation to the ownership of the means of production or in relation to the production of surplus value itself, but in relation to the sources of income, because here there are other differences that are interesting. The basic share of the wealth produced can be allocated in the form of profits and wages to the primary classes of society, but in fact the distribution of the surplus is by no means as simple as that.

There are the different strata of capitalists: those engaged in commercial capital, in banking and insurance. And then of very great importance is the fact, that with the development of modern society, the role of the state has increased greatly in importance. The state finances itself by its system of taxation and borrowing, and through the income raised in that way itself becomes the employer of very large sections of people such as the Civil Service, those engaged in the state system of education, the largest part of those engaged in the health services. And, therefore, this provides a third way of looking at the social structure; one which focuses, not so much on class shall I say, but on social strata. Do we sometimes counterpose class and strata in too rigid a way, as though those who constitute strata must somehow lie outside the main class structure of society, or in between? This does not necessarily follow if the approach I am making has some validity.

As a result of the development of capitalist society, its technical changes, the needs arising from working-class struggle in health and education, the development of the apparatus of government and state machine itself, what we have normally termed the middle strata undoubtedly grow in importance. They take a considerable share of the total wage and salaries allocated to those who are not the capitalists, and, for this reason, the capitalists see them as costs, and treat them accordingly and therefore, increasingly the technician, the qualified person may be under the same kind of economic pressure as the industrial worker has always been in the course of his existence.

Now I am suggesting that it is fruitful to take these three aspects which I have distinguished and to deal with them not schematically (as I have dealt with them) but by showing the inter-relation between these aspects, by studying the movements of these classes and strata in their historical movement. It might be useful in analysing in particular what are called the middle strata of our society. If we examined a category like teachers, we might then avoid on the one hand simply lumping them in with the working-class as we have known it, while recognising as a result of the development of society their growing affinity with the working-class. We would recognise the impact of capitalist class policies on them in terms of salaries and conditions, and yet at the same time we would study their specific features, their historical evolution, their place in society as the employees largely of the state, or of local government, and, therefore, give us some better insight into what somebody called the "physiology" of a social strata.

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Critics of Marxism

There has been, of course, a very fierce attack on the Marxist theory of class. The most devastating attack comes from those who seek to separate property in the means of production from class and power, and say that in modern capitalist society these things have, in fact, become separated and that therefore, the validity of the Marxist view of class structure no longer holds. This is accompanied by a whole series of theories—that we are all middle-class now, that the workers are disappearing, the capitalists are disappearing, industry is becoming less important in society, consumer status is becoming uppermost as a criterion of status for the great majority of the people and so forth. In the end what remains of the working-class is turned into some kind of Freudian cesspool; they become a collection of psychopaths and bed-wetters. In fact one sociometrist, Dr. Morrelly, defined the proletariat in these words, "as all who suffer from some form of misery, psychological, social, economic, political, racial and religious", which makes the proletariat embrace everybody, I should think, in society. So he has both cut it down to size and made it the most all-embracing category in one blow!

Since I have dealt with some of these theories elsewhere[1] I am not proposing to elaborate on them here but to move on a question closely related to class, which is the theme of power; and I am talking primarily here of political or state power.

Class and Political Power

The Marxists maintain that there is an extremely close connection between class and political power. In essence, we consider that capitalist state power is power used to maintain the capitalist mode of production, and that working-class state power is power either to bring into being a socialist mode of production, or to maintain it. This, for example, would be the kind of criterion, if I can leave the purely academic field, that we would apply for example to a new Labour Government. We would regard it (in terms of power) as having a clear alternative: either it will operate the capitalist mode of production, and if it does then it becomes an agency of capitalist rule. One might say that the content of political power remains in the hands of the capitalist class. Or it will use its parliamentary majority, and the fact that it has formed an administration to transform the mode of production in the direction of socialism. We would not think of it as having any other choice than these two, even though there might be a variety of modifications.

But while the Marxist study of power is still full of limitations, the concept of power in current sociology is almost a catastrophe, because there power has been separated almost totally from any economic basis. Now one can argue that this derives partly from the tradition of political, diplomatic and military history, where force appears as something in its own right; but it contrasts with the Marxist view, which locates power in the main structure of society, and which does not regard it as a question of personal attributes.

This helps us to have a unitary conception of the social structure since it does not regard power as an evil factor operating from outside society, or as some form of original sin, or only a matter of domination, but as a quality inherent in every form of society. The question to be asked of power is not whether in general it is good or bad, but in whose interests and for what aims. This is the essence of our approach to power, locating it as I say in the class structure and character of society.

Series of Institutions?

Now this is felt to be so by many sociologists, in addition to the Marxists, particularly by those influenced by Marxism. For example, if you would turn to an essay published in the United States in 1955, by Professor Robert Lynd on *Power in American Society as Resource and Problem,* he writes:

> "If effective power both in the government which gives away such a resource to private business, and in organised business which receives the resource derives from the same effective class power in the underlying social structure, then such exchange of favours at the institutional level becomes a foregone conclusion—a simple transfer from one pocket to the other of the same pair of trousers—and democracy is largely emptied of content."

Then he goes on to say:

> "the generating source of organised power in any society inheres in the social structure of society . . . to attempt fundamental changes in institutions of a kind that affects the basic character of organised power in a given society, without changing the social structure of that society, is like trying to drive a car forward with the gears set in reverse."

This is precisely the criticism that we made, of the Labour Government from '45 to '51.

Of course, there is another way in which power has been used by many sociologists—that is to break up society into congeries of power groups and power structures. To my mind this is linked

[1] See *The Ruling Class* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1961).

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with the analysis of society in terms of a multitude of institutions.

In the field that I have been specially interested in, the study of the capitalist economic structure, I have noted how many economists do not in fact examine the dynamic of a capitalist economy, but analyse it from the stand-point of its particular institutions. They examine banks, insurance companies and private firms, as distinct types of institutions, each with its own history and characteristics. They do not examine the dynamic interrelation of those institutions and, therefore, they miss the point of how in fact they function in terms both of power and of economics in a given capitalist society.

I think the same basic error happens in the field of sociology. By breaking society down into a series of institutions, then regarding each of these institutions as power structures, they separate it in essence from the main class structure of society and, therefore, are in danger of trivialising some of the very important questions which they have raised.

Then when they have broken society down into a series of institutions and power structures, they begin to analyse who has power, and who is excluded from power in these institutions. They go on to calculate, sometimes with the aid even of statistics of a very advanced kind, what the chances are of an individual entering the circle of power. And one man has worked out the chances of an individual being in the ruling class as one in sixteen generations, as far as he is able to calculate.

Now having worked out what are the chances of an individual entering the circle of power, the focus is shifted, sometimes subtly and sometimes crudely, from the class structure of society to the problem of social mobility. That is to say the way in which individuals are moving about from one level of an institution to another; and when you begin to analyse social mobility you find that you are being led into an analysis of it on the basis of personal motivation. It then tends to become reduced to a problem of individual psychology.

This happens, not only in economic analysis and not only in sociology but also in political theory. Much of the discussion on the role of the lobbies, and the role of pressure groups in British society is basically that type of approach to the class structure of our society.

There are some interesting and one might say paradoxical consequences of approaching power in that particular way, because you can then in fact, through these views of power, make them the basis for an attack on democracy. This is because the whole question of politics becomes who has power, and who is excluded from it.

It can become the basis either for a mystical theory of leadership, or of disdain for the problem or the necessity of leadership. It can become an apology for non-commitment on the grounds that political theory is clean, but political practice is positively mucky!

I agree that even the view which I have expressed is an approach which is very easily vulgarised. One may vulgarise it into the existence of a narrow capitalist conspiracy. One may presuppose the existence of some central control, in which all the leading capitalists are busy exchanging their ideas and arrive at firm definite conclusions. In spite of this danger the basic Marxist approach is more fruitful, even than the view of that very great American sociologist Wright-Mills, who substitutes for the concept of ruling-class the concept of the power élite.

Concept of Mode of Production

Before I close I want to return in my final section to what I think is a major weakness of much modern sociology, and at the same time a very fruitful part of Marxist thought. That is the concept of the mode of production, as defining a given social system and as distinguishing different types. And I use it so to speak in bringing out what I think are three errors that bedevil much of modern sociology. First of all the selection of a particular feature of modern society, as for example the level of technique, or the level of incomes, and then categorising the society as primarily having that character. So you have the term "the industrial society", "the technological society", "the affluent society", and some come very near to calling it the "educated society".

I would challenge Dr. Halsey precisely on this point, because in an introduction to a volume of essays which he edited in the United States on *Education, Economy and Society* (a volume of great value and interest), he and Dr. Jean Floud write an introduction, in which they say:

> "the broad picture of the process by which as the economies of the advanced countries are increasingly dominated by scientific and technological innovation, education and economy become more closely geared, until the education system occupies a strategic place as a central determinant of the economic, political, social and cultural character of a society."

They go on to say:

> "There can be little doubt indeed that differences in educational provision, whether between nations, regions or classes do reflect differences in the movement towards prosperity on the basis

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> of modern technology. Educational inequalities become in effect fundamentally determinant of all social inequality" (p. 3).

Again, they refer to the motion of a type of society, the technological society, towards which western industrial countries are more or less rapidly moving. And there is one sociologist who argues that in fact there are only two types of society worth talking about in our age, the industrialised society and those who are trying to become industrialised. That surely is simple failure to grasp what is a given mode of production and, therefore, the mistaken elevation of a particular feature.

Secondly I think it leads to the wrong sort of comparative studies between different types of societies, where these comparative studies are conducted without due regard to the nature of the differences. For instance here the most elaborate work on managerial bureaucracy in the United States of America, and managerial bureaucracy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a study which inevitably throws very little light on the actual nature of their economic system and on the driving forces behind the different economic development.

Industrial Relations

I come to a third error, which is of enormous importance. This neglect of the idea of a mode of production, with its combination of productive forces and productive relations, has a particular impact in the field of industrial relations and workshop sociology. Here we have a whole school of thought, very much developing in influence, becoming accepted in the field of business, which regards conflict in industry as in fact irrational. Or put it this way, it tends to regard managements, in so far as they operate on the basis of efficiency and costs, as being driven by logical arguments and thoughts, whilst workers operating on the basis of sentiment are deprived of any rational explanation for their behaviour.

Now this is not my personal criticism of what one might call industrial relations. If conflict is treated as irrational, equilibrium is treated as the norm, the ideas of individual psychology are imported into the problems of society, and I hope the psychologists who are here will forgive me, but one can envisage the intelligent, wise, father-like figure of the managing director coping with the irrational tendencies of his workmen, and as a result of treating them in the best sociological manner, benefiting from that wonderful quality, that psychiatrists benefit from when they treat their patients, namely a transfer of affection!

In fact, of course, I would not argue that the sociology of small groups, which is a field which must be much applied to workshop sociology, has no future, or is not an important aspect of sociological theory. It seems to me that like any other part of the social sciences, it is necessarily part of man's mastery over himself, and is probably going to develop with very great strides in future, in the future development of society, but it has to be placed in its proper context. If one examines the reason for these three errors that I have suggested, it's because they either show a poor grasp, or they reject the class nature of capitalist society. They are unwilling to recognise that the working class must play the leading role in the transformation of society, with all the political and social consequences that follow from that.

Reply to Discussion

The following are some points from Sam Aaronovitch's reply to the discussion

I want first of all to welcome those who consider themselves non-Marxists, for coming to the discussion this evening. We do not want this discussion in order to tie labels on those who take part in it. We assume that when we engage in a discussion of this kind, the purpose is to try and analyse more truthfully the nature of the society in which we live, and in the hope that additional knowledge of society will lead to correct revolutionary action.

I am indebted to those who raise the question of the categories in which society is analysed, and the degree to which they arise from either attempts to change the world, or from attempts to resist that change.

The whole concept of the mode of production is vital in this context. This is because the mode of production points to the entire basis of social life. I draw your attention to a quotation from Engels, where he puts it in this way:

> "A surplus of the product of labour over and above the costs of maintenance of labour, and

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> the formation and enlargement, by means of this surplus, of a social production and reserve fund was, and is, the basis of all social, political and intellectual progress. In history up to the present this fund has been the possession of a privileged class on which also devolved, along with this possession, political supremacy and intellectual leadership" (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 221).

I have chosen this quotation because it combines this relationship between the material base of the life of society, without which after all it would die, and the ideas and political structures which are built upon that particular basis.

Changes in Capitalism?

It is true that it is vital to analyse, as another speaker said, the changes which have taken place in the mode of production. Is it true to argue that if you define a mode of production as representing a certain combination of productive forces and productive relations, such as capitalism, we are not simply talking about something that existed in the nineteenth century, but we are discussing certain features which operate equally at the present time? If we take for example the Crossland-type critique of Marxism, it is that what Marxists call capitalism, was something specific to the nineteenth century, and that it was equal to, or the equivalent of, or identical with laissez-faire. It followed that if you had the development of monopolies which were not subject to the free play of the market, capitalism as Marx defined it had ceased to exist. Therefore, the mode of production had not simply changed; it had been transformed.

Now in our analysis, the development of monopoly is not a new mode of production, but is a development within an existing mode of production, so that regarded from its class essence, twentieth-century capitalism is in its essentials capitalism just as nineteenth-century capitalism was in its essentials capitalism. There *are* considerable differences, but they are differences within that overall class structure. Now, we have to make up our minds whether that is correct, both by scientific study, and also by the efforts we make to change that given mode of production. That also helps us to understand whether the system we are fighting today, or seeking to change today has an identical class character to that which it did in the nineteenth century.

I am not countering to that the study of the changes which have taken place; changes in the composition of classes; changes in the mode by which classes operate; changes in the circumstances under which one or other class maintains its position; changes in the conditions under which one or other class seeks to change its position, as for example if one analysed the influence of the growth of the socialist world on working-class struggles in the remaining capitalist countries, or if one studied undeveloped countries becoming independent, the influence on their class development if you like, also of the growth of the socialist world. All such study is perfectly legitimate. And yet when one is making that study you must use categories which attempt to get at their essential features, as well as allow you to explain the changes which have taken place within them.

Wright-Mills

The main controversy in our discussion has been about Wright-Mills, and I will come to that in a moment. A word first on Dahrendorf. One of the reasons again for raising this question of mode of production was to inject an historical approach into the study of society. One of the really striking things about Dahrendorf's approach is that, in so far as he abstracts the role of power and takes it away from its material basis, it is extremely difficult to understand why one form of power is substituted for another. Therefore it becomes impossible to understand historical change, and consequently only the broadest type of description is open to him, such as between industrial societies and non-industrial societies. In this way he can evade the question of political power.

Now in regard to Wright-Mills. Was I right in being sympathetic to Wright-Mills? Is he a renegade to Marxism? Is he a renegade to capitalism? Was he any kind of renegade? C. Wright-Mills has been compared to Kautsky. A very harsh fate.

Wright-Mills was not a Marxist who then decided that Marxism was not for him, or decided he was going to change it in any fundamental sense. He was, I suppose, an American liberal, who in the course of fighting for certain radical and democratic needs as he saw them and in his study of society saw certain virtues in Marxism. Here is where the context is important. In the American context that is and was very important, and therefore we must pay a tribute to Wright-Mills for performing that role. He did sharply attack the whole way sociology was being reduced to trivialities. He made a very devastating exposure, whatever its limitations, of the nature of American ruling-class society. He was a fierce opponent of the aggressive military and political policies of the United States government. I regard that as a very big contribution. His defence of the Cuban revolution after all, whatever its limitations, was also very important in the context in which we understand it. And he called on intellec-

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tuals to recognise the nature of the U.S. government, its hostility to radical and democratic courses. And *we* are not the enemy of radical and democratic courses; we are ourselves the protagonists of such courses, though we recognise that to resolve the problems that Wright-Mills dealt with requires a socialist transformation of society, which he himself was not prepared fully to advocate or recognise.

Having made that approach to Wright-Mills, then what follows from it is this. That as Marxists, and as sociologists, we do not regard Wright-Mills as a kind of under-cover agent choosing to undermine Marxism but as one of those American radicals whom the logic of American experience was moving towards the left.

And our approach to him would be, were he alive, and to those who follow his ideas, to help both to learn, and to develop those thoughts into a fully socialist understanding. Now when we do this, then, of course, it is correct for us to come to grips with the ideas of Wright-Mills, both where we consider they are helpful in analysing society, and where we consider they are mistaken. And if we are to do that then it seems to me there are, in fact, whole numbers of errors in the work of Wright-Mills which may be placed again in the context of the United States society and the stage at which he was working and fighting.

Ruling Class

Now I did not quote the passage from Wright-Mills on the power élite for reasons of brevity. I have the extract in front of me, I have quoted it in my own recent book on this question. His notion of a trinity of forces, the military élite, the political élite, and the economic élite, or corporate rich, has not been empirically justified by him; particularly in terms of the military élite, as an almost autonomous force, co-operating on equal terms with the corporate rich and also with the politicians. In terms of the link between political rule and the economically dominant class, I would say there are mountains of evidence for that being true of the United States, of Britain, of Western Germany and in fact of all capitalist states.

Now the idea of ruling-class does contain this concept. Wright-Mills says class is an economic category. Ruling-class, therefore, implies that the class embodying that, therefore, politically rules; therefore you are taking it into your assumption, instead of proving it. Marxists consider that this flows from a given mode of production.

That was the reason, for example, for my particular treatment of a Labour Government because this poses the question in its sharpest form. You may have a government which calls itself by any name it pleases, which has an elected majority, which describes itself as a workers' government, or a socialist government, or a labour government, or a people's government, or any name it cares to give, but it still confronts the fact that it operates in the framework of a given mode of production. And the argument is that either that government breaks that given mode of production and brings into being another mode of production, or it is obliged to operate it. If it operates it, who is politically the ruling-class? I know that the point of view which I am presenting has its crudities, but I did say that it seemed to me that in that sense the content of political rule remains in the hands of the capitalist class. The consequence, for example, of a Labour Government failing to make those changes, therefore failing to take real political power, is that its own rule ends sooner or later in disillusionment and apathy, because the real effective rule of the capitalist class destroys it, either by demagogy, or by financial and economic manipulation. This seems to me to be proven by the historical experience of such governments. And, therefore, I say there is strong evidence as well as deriving from our kind of analysis, of the relationship between economic and political structures in a given society.

One speaker raised this question of the actual nature of the ruling class. There are problems which need a great deal further investigation. I cannot say that in every respect the capitalist class today is identical with what it was in the middle of the nineteenth century. There have been quite important changes. It is true, for example, that the effective controllers of the great corporations and the financial institutions in Britain may very well today, in their particular organisations, own only a minority of the total stock; although the studies which have been made of the distribution of capital, of the ownership of capital show that collectively they form the overwhelming owners of stocks and shares and, therefore, hold the actual legal title if you like to ownership in the means of production. Collectively, therefore, that capitalist class undoubtedly exists, but the scale of operations on which they are engaging has brought about a picture where these great organisations are very often battlefields for conflicting groups of capitalists, using their particular blocks of capital to knock each other out of the field, and to gain control of capital resources which dwarf their own personal ownerships. These are changes which to some degree Marx and Engels foresaw, as you will find in *Capital*, Volume 3.

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Managers and Directors

Again, because of the way capitalism has changed, the way in which the method of exploitation has altered, much of what passes by the name of salaries on the part of directors is simply another way of transferring surplus value into their own pockets.

The third point which I would like to make is this. In so far as power is a product of property ownership, and is a product of private property ownership in a capitalist society, the driving force behind the great corporations is not the subjective motivations of a manager, or a scientific director, as some have sought to pretend, but the logic of the capitalist market itself, to which these corporations have to subscribe. They have to obey those laws of the market or else be knocked out and give way to more powerful rivals. And, therefore, it seems to me again, that if one takes all those aspects together there is great force in the Marxist analysis, and there is a big weakness in the type of criticism which is directed at it.

I think it is also correct to make the criticism of C. Wright-Mills that he did neglect the role of the working class, and that to a very real extent he exaggerated the role of the intellectuals, and expected them to do what they alone in fact are incapable of doing. This was an illusion for which the American intellectuals will have to pay very dearly, unless they contribute to the revival of a socialist consciousness in the American working-class movement.

I do not think I want to develop my critique of Wright-Mills any further. I only tried to combine what is the historical place of people like Wright-Mills, and the way in which we should treat quite seriously and soberly the analysis which they have made, and make our criticism of their positions so as to move forward that whole criticism of capitalist society.

Let me say in conclusion that as Marxists we are passionately concerned with the analysis of change; if anybody has any contribution to make, both to the analysis of that change, and to changing society, let us get on with it.

The Fight Against the Contagious Diseases Act

— a Forgotten Crusade

Marian Ramelson

Why, asks Moberley Bell:

> "If Florence Nightingale be remembered as the 'Lady with the Lamp' whose shadow wounded soldiers in the Crimea kissed in passing—a sadly misplaced myth it must be said—[is] Josephine Butler . . . practically forgotten, her great work appears buried with her in her grave . . .
>
> "It is correct to emphasise that like her compatriot, her work spanned countries and continents. Both she and Florence Nightingale tangled with the Government on many things including the Indian Army, the one on the licensing system of brothels, the other on military hospitals. In each case they left the Government officials, especially the British British Civil and military authorities in India, sadder if not wiser men." [1]

This is a pertinent question. And the answer, in my view, lies in the fact that the "Great Crusade" (as it was called at the time), was a classical example of the combination of Parliamentary with mass action, that it mobilised immense forces and that it was successful. It is possible to make a myth of Florence Nightingale: it is impossible to do the same with Josephine Butler. Therefore all is silence. It is high time this silence was broken.

[1] E. Moberley Bell, *Josephine Butler*, (Constable) 1962.

Josephine Butler

Josephine Butler was born in Dilston, Northumberland, on April 13th, 1828, the seventh child of John and Hannah Grey. The family was a large and prosperous one. John Grey was identified with radical causes, especially the campaign against the slave trade. Josephine's home was a happy one. The doors were always open to visitors and the rooms echoed with discussions on all the issues of the day. The children were not closed out from these discussions, and it is clear that the girls did not feel in an inferior position in raising their point of view. Their mother was a strong supporter of her husband's views and work. The marriage of John and

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Hannah Grey was not only a fruitful one, but a happy one of shared work and interests.

Josephine was a handsome, if not very strong girl. She was witty and gay. At the same time she was intensely serious. Very early in life she struggled with the question "How could it be if God was infinitely good that such misery could be allowed to exist in the world?" She pondered long and alone on this question and finally resolved it. She concluded that there was a God and he was indeed infinitely good. But not only was Christ crucified, but every day the sons of men were being crucified. It was, therefore, the responsibility of every true Christian to fight the evil that was responsible for this enormity. It was her own responsibility, too, to fight and to awaken others to do the same. This belief and this conception of God never deserted her throughout her long life.

In 1852 she married George Butler at Dilston. He was an ordained Church of England clergyman, son of the Dean of Peterborough. It was to prove to be an exceedingly happy marriage.

Tragedy

The first five years of her married life were spent in Oxford. She moved to Cheltenham in 1857, where her husband had become Vice-Principal of Cheltenham College. It was here that the greatest tragedy of personal life occurred. Her only daughter, dashing to meet her parents on their return to the house, fell down the stairs and was killed. In 1866 the family again moved, this time to Liverpool where George Butler became Principal of Liverpool College. It was here, too, that the direction of what was to become her life's work had its roots. She tells us that she was "overcome with an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own".[2]

She went to the oakum sheds, to the workhouses, to the Lock hospitals. She found and befriended prostitutes. She took them into her home, not as servants but as friends to be nursed and cared for and returned to health if possible, if not, to surround them with care until their death. Her home became overcrowded: yet it could not even begin to tackle the problem. Another house was obtained and still hundreds beseeched her help. She writes:

> "Among the 9,000 women who are pursuing this calling (i.e. prostitution) in one of our great seaports, a late enquiry showed that 1,500 were under fifteen years of age and of these about a third were under thirteen years of age. It is much the same in other towns." [3]

No wonder it felt like trying to sweep back the sea with a broom and that the conviction grew that private charity was not enough.

[2] Josephine Butler, *Women's Work and Women's Culture* (MacMillan & Co.) 1869.

[3] *Op. cit.*

Legalised Prostitution

In the meantime, the Government had been giving great thought to this problem and had indeed put through a series of Enactments. But their thoughts and their acts were all in quite the opposite direction from Mrs. Butler's. They were greatly concerned at the large incidence of venereal disease in the armed forces which accounted for more casualties, more consistently, then anything else.

In 1864, the Duke of Somerset, Lord Clarence Paget, Lord de Grey and other Ministers and ex-Ministers connected with the army and navy met to discuss what could be done about this problem and especially how to get infected women to be voluntarily treated. Before this, in 1860, Lord Herbert, Secretary of State for War, had appointed a Commission to enquire into the state of the army and make recommendations for its improvement.

The Commission's recommendations had been for better sanitary arrangements and efforts to improve the habits of the men. As a result barracks had been provided, lavatories installed. So were libraries, tennis courts and some attempt made to give the men some industrial training. As a result the incidence of V.D. had gone down from 146 per 1,000 in 1860 to 87 per 1,000 in 1866.[4]

The 1864 Bill

This experience was ignored. On June 20th, 1864, Lord Clarence Paget introduced a "Bill for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases at certain Naval and Military Stations". The Bill was to be of three years' duration. It was to apply to Portsmouth, Plymouth, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Aldershot, Colchester, Shorncliffe, the Curragh, Cork and Queenstown. (It is well to remember that these were in fact much larger areas than the names suggest. Colchester, for example, included sixteen and Aldershot twenty-three parishes.)

The instrument created to enforce the Bill was a special branch of the Metropolitan Police, entirely outside the jurisdiction of the local authorities, answerable only to the Admiralty and War Offices. They were to work in plain clothes (by the 1869 Act). The Bill provided for the certifying of hospitals where women could be officially housed. It made no provision for men, their wives or families and applied only to those officially declared common prostitutes. But there was the rub. Who was to say just who was a "common prostitute"? According to the Bill, a woman could be declared a common prostitute if a police inspector or superintendent or medical man laid information before a magistrate that he deemed her to be so. The magistrate could

[4] Benjamin Scott, *A State Iniquity: Rise: Extension and Overthrow* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trobner & Co. Ltd.) 1890.

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then issue a summons that the woman present herself to be examined at a certified hospital, failing which she had to appear before him. Should she refuse she could be imprisoned for one month for the first offence and two months for every subsequent offence. Should a woman be found to be suffering from disease she was immediately detained in hospital for not more than three months.

Any woman, therefore, whom a policeman or a medical man thought to be a prostitute was one unless she allowed herself to be medically examined to prove she was not. It should be recognised at once that this Bill proposed one of the worst infringements on democratic rights ever to be presented to Parliament. It placed the responsibility upon women to prove a negative. The very placing of their names before a court branded them. They could become (and indeed many did become) prey of the unscrupulous.

The Bill passed all three readings and gained Royal Assent by July 21st, 1864. There was no debate at any reading in either House of Parliament.

Thus emboldened, a further Bill was enacted in 1866 which provided for the registration of Prostitutes and added Windsor to the places within the scope of the Acts. The Right Hon. James Henley, a Conservative told the House he thought it a queer Bill on a queer subject. Mr. Ayrton, a Liberal, was scathing in his comments. He said it was a Bill to provide public women at public expense for the gratification of our soldiers and sailors. "The proposal is a disgrace to the country. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.) would assume a heavy responsibility if he allowed the Bill to pass into law."[5] Nevertheless it became law.

For and Against

The Regulationists (as they were called) were satisfied with the system, but not with the scope of the Act. They wanted it to apply to the whole country. For this they were busily campaigning, led by Dr. Berkerley Hill. There were forty-three branches throughout the country involved in the campaign. The leading doctors of the day, including the Presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians favoured this as did the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge and the leading church dignitaries. Most damaging of all was the fact that the few women who had managed to qualify as doctors supported the measure, with the single exception of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first British woman to qualify.

August 11th, 1869, saw the last of the C.D. Acts. It added six more places to those within their scope viz: Canterbury, Dover, Gravesend, Maidstone, Winchester and Southampton making eighteen in all and, at the same time, enlarged the areas covered.

Some campaigning had already gone on against the Acts, but it was sporadic. In 1863, Harriet Martineau had attacked them in leaders she wrote in the *Daily News*. Not another word was heard until 1868 when Dr. Hooppell, a clergyman of South Shields seeing a report of a meeting in the Mayor's Parlour, Newcastle, at which twelve medical men, twelve laymen and three clergymen had resolved to petition Parliament for the extension of the Acts, published a letter in the *Shields Gazette* (7th May, 1868) in which he explained and denounced the system. As Principal of the Winterbottom Nautical College at South Shields he fired an important first shot.

He was soon joined in his campaigning by Dr. Rutherford of Newcastle and Dr. Charles Bell Taylor, an oculist of Nottingham. It was these men who turned to Josephine Butler and asked her to take up the campaign to Repeal the C.D. Acts. To their plea was added that of Harriet Martineau.

The Campaign Begins

It is difficult to imagine in these days just what a terrifying call this was to Josephine Butler. It was the age of Victorianism—vulgar, hypocritical and so very very respectable.

Sex was a taboo subject, not to be discussed. Prostitutes were not even to be thought of by respectable women and venereal disease was supposed to be an unknown fact to them.

She knew that it would mean losing friends, making herself a target for the foulest abuse and attack and that it would involve absence from home very often and for long periods. "The toils and conflicts of the years that followed were light in comparison with the anguish of the first plunge."[6] Between her and her husband there had always existed the utmost confidence and mutual sharing of work and ideas. But she felt she could not face him and tell him what she proposed doing, so she slipped a note under his door containing the news, coming back later to face him. He told her how much he supported her and how he would stand by her side in all she did, whatever the consequences.

George Butler was indeed an unusual man even by twentieth-century standards. By those of the nineteenth century he was almost unbelievable. It takes a very great man indeed to stand up to the ridicule of his friends, their mock commiseration that he is married to a virago, to see his wife win world fame, yet to feel no regret, no anguish but to give only his unfailing love and support. Her three sons as they grew up also supported her, as did her entire family.

[5] Benjamin Scott, *op cit*.

[6] Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (Horace Marshall & Son), 1911.

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Her first step was to organise a letter to be signed by leading women protesting against the Acts. Originally it had 124 signatures, but this quickly quickly rose to 2,000. It was published in the *Daily News* (December 31st, 1869) and amongst the signatories besides Mrs. Butler's were those of Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Mary Carpenter, all the sisters and female relatives of John Bright, all the leading women in the Society of Friends and many others. It caused consternation. An M.P. was heard to exclaim that it would be extraordinarily difficult to handle "the women".

Turn to the Workers

Already, however, many in "respectable" society had refused to even discuss the matter. It was here she took, what in my view, was the decisive decision which led to the success of the campaign. *She decided to turn to the working men of Britain.* Above all, it was their women folk who were affected by the Acts. As a working man said in a letter to Mrs. Butler:

> "These gentlemen who make such a noise about the necessity of prostitution too often forget, I think, that in order to satisfy that necessity, *the dishonour of the daughters of the people* is indispensable, for till now none of the worshippers of these medical theories have been found ready to declare their willingness that *their own daughters* should be sacrificed" (Italics by letter writer).[7]

Professor James Stuart, a personal friend, the first lecturer at women's meetings in the North of England, arranged a meeting for her in the railway sheds at Crewe. It was overwhelmingly successful. They agreed to petition, to support her and urged her to go forth amongst the working men. This first effort was quickly followed by a meeting in Leeds and then in other parts. It is important to note, on the testimony of Josephine Butler herself that these meetings were arranged by the working men, who wired their friends in other towns to arrange meetings and give support.

The backbone of these workers was undoubtedly the trade unionists. It is well to recall that, at this period, the working class had no independent political party. The first Socialist societies were only beginning to emerge when this campaign was almost within sight of victory. The one independent class organisation they had was the, as yet, not very strong trade union movement which gave the campaign for repeal some of its most consistent supporters, fighters and organisers. It was in 1873, at the TUC Conference in Leeds, that Josephine Butler and her husband both spoke at a meeting where in her words:

> "we met in a friendly conference by agreement with the working men, who were present in considerable numbers. There were Joseph Arch, Henry Broadhurst, George Howell . . . it is needless to say their sympathies were wholly with us." [8]

In 1873 Josephine addressed a meeting in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. It was at this meeting that Edmund Jones and "other prominent working men of Liverpool" resolved to organise an association for the repeal amongst working men. They did so. It was called the Working Men's National League. It established its H.Q. in London in 1876. Edmund Jones was its President until his death in 1882 and Joseph Joyce its Secretary. Fifty thousand working men were enrolled as members. From 1876, it published its own journal monthly, *The National League Journal*, which was incorporated into *The Sentinel* after the Repeal.

Joseph Arch, M.P., Henry Broadhurst, M.P., William Count of Bristol (who played a big part in the fight for women's votes and the early Women's Trade Unions) and George Howell were amongst the ninety-eight members of the National Committee. Working men joined the deputations and they formed a very important part of the campaigning force at the by-elections.

Carrying the Campaign to the Hustings

Another feature of the campaign was the work in the by-elections—a platform that was also used by the women's movement in its fight for the vote. But, unfortunately, it never was able to win the results that were won by the Repealers. Undoubtedly, one of the most amazing by-elections ever fought was that in Colchester in 1870. One would have to go back to Wilkes' time to find anything comparable, and even then Wilkes was a candidate and, in that capacity, able to appeal to the voters.

Colchester was a garrison town. It was one of the areas originally covered in the 1864 C.D. Act, and it was very far from being a working-class stronghold. In fact, it was a Liberal seat won at the previous election by a 183 majority (2,751 votes being cast). The Liberal Government was very eager to get Sir Henry Storks into the House. Sir Henry had been the Governor of Malta where he had been responsible for operating the provisions of the C.D. Acts. It was that experience that they wanted to use in this country.

The Repealers decided to challenge Sir Henry Storks and with him the whole iniquitous system which had been saddled on the country.

Mr. Learmouth, the Tory candidate, was also sympathetic to the Acts. But, rightly, the Repealers decided to concentrate their fire on the defeat of Storks running a third candidate to draw some support away from him. They then descended on

[7] E. Moberley Bell, *Josephine Butler*, p. 233.

[8] Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences . . .*

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the town. A mob was organised against them.

Officially the Acts did not provide for brothels. At the same time they made it a crime for brothel keepers to house diseased women. The brothel keepers were the main organisers of the mobs, but they were supported by all "polite" society. Josephine Butler went round the streets in disguise. Whenever it was known that she was staying at a particular hotel, the mob congregated and threatened to burn down the place. The men Repealers were mauled, pelted with every kind of filth and had their clothes torn off their backs. To address a meeting of women, Mrs. Butler went in a shawl, as a poor woman, to evade being lynched and after the meeting had to be smuggled out of the back door. Mrs. Butler tells of one incident which is immensely moving:

> "I walked down a by-street one evening after we had held several meetings with the wives of electors, when I met an immense working man, a stalwart man, trudging along home after work hours. By his side trotted his wife—a fragile woman, but with a fierce determination on her small thin face. At the moment she was shaking her fist in her husband's face, and I heard her say 'Now, you know all about it; if you vote for that man Storks, Tom, *I'll kill ye*'." [9]

Nothing daunted the Repealers, they campaigned, they met, they distributed material: they electioneered with a will.

Josephine left Colchester before the election. After it she received a laconic telegram "Shot dead". And, indeed, so Sir Henry Storks had been electorally speaking. Of the 2,265 votes cast he received 869 (the third candidate withdrew before election day) and was resoundingly defeated by 527 votes. The Government was shaken to its foundations. Later he was smuggled into Parliament for the "pocket" borough of Ripon, but never played any large part in the House.

Working Class Support

The Repealers intervened to stop candidates from being adopted with great success. They brought majorities tumbling into the dust. They organised the harrying of the life out of M.P.s. They were utterly indefatigable.

Many of these by-election battles are noteworthy. The only other one I would like to refer to is the election in Pontefract in August 1873. The candidate was a Liberal, a popular candidate who had held the seat for twelve years (the by-election was necessitated by his elevation to government office). Again the Repealers, headed by Mrs. Butler, moved in. The important thing here was the support of the working men. They surrounded the Repealers. They would not allow them to be driven into side streets. They walked by their side, affording them their protection. Working men walked long miles to give of their help. One letter from a working man in Leeds to Josephine Butler describes how, on the eve of the election, he walked from Leeds to Pontefract to take part in the distribution of leaflets into every house in the constituency during the night.

He addressed meetings, distributed leaflets, was nearly mobbed in a pub, and then walked home, arriving there at 4.30 a.m. and so on to work. He ends:

> "To say I was tired to start with, is to give but a faint idea of my condition: it was a case of must be so I cheerfully accepted the task . . . and, if necessary, I am fully prepared to accept the same amount of pleasure again . . ." [10]

Childers' majority had been 233 in the 1868 election. It was reduced to eighty at the by-election. Seven hundred and five electors abstained from casting their votes. In due course, Mr. Childers, too, became a convert to the Repeal of the C.D. Acts.

The Government Tacks to the Wind

All these happenings, the meetings, the petitions, the organisations which proliferated, the deputations and above all, the by-election results did not leave the Government unaffected. In 1871 it set up a Royal Commission. Josephine Butler came out against it, and for this she has been criticised by later writers (but not, incidentally, by those who worked with her). In my view, she was absolutely right to oppose it.

As she read the situation, the whole campaign was building up to victory and the Royal Commission was a deliberate attempt by the Government to bring the Movement to a halt. She was not a member of the Commission (such a concept would have been impossible then), but she did give evidence. For those who see only a moral campaign, a religious fanaticism which drove her on, would do well to ponder on her evidence to the Commission where she pointed out that economics was at the root of prostitution. It was in the fact of low women's wages and lack of opportunities that the reasons were to be found. Women were *forced* into prostitution.

But it was on February 6th, 1872, with the introduction of Bruce's Bill (M.P. for Renfrewshire and Home Secretary), that the most deadly blow to the Repealers was dealt. Bruce proposed in his Bill to raise the age of consent from twelve years to fourteen years, and to rescind the C.D. Acts. But he intended to fasten them, under a new name, on the whole country, to make women liable to prosecution under the Vagrants Act and to extend their time

[9] *Op. cit.*

[10] *Ibid*, p. 48.

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of forcible detention for treatment to nine months.

A Conference of National Representatives was held with 250 delegates attending. The parliamentary friends of the Repeal were strongly in favour of giving the Bill a Second Reading and using the Committee stage to try and remove the objectionable clauses. Speaker after speaker declared for the Second Reading. Then Lydia Becker (the most powerful and important figure of the early Suffrage Movement) stood up and moved a resolution, on behalf of the Ladies' Committee, against the Second Reading, describing the Bill as an endeavour to smother, not to satisfy the agitation. Finally an amended resolution was carried which, whilst criticising the Bill, agreed to support the Second Reading.

But Mrs. Butler did not despair. She immediately organised and spoke at a whole series of mass meetings throughout the North. The journal of the Movement, *The Shield*, kept open its columns to the arguments against the Bill. By June the whole position had substantially changed and, on July 15th, 1873, Mr. Bruce withdrew his Bill "amid cheers of the Opposition".

It was the first and only serious split to threaten the Movement. Many did fall away. But the sacrifice of principle to a hollow victory was averted, by building up pressure on the Government *against the Bill* from the North especially, by means of mass meetings and petitions. This in turn helped the friendly M.P.s to reconsider their position and, in the majority of cases, to change it.

The Government felt itself under ever-mounting pressure. Only that can explain the wild delirium with which they greeted a petition presented to the House by Dr. Brewer. It was from prostitutes in Colchester, urging them to maintain the Acts. Before the Repealers had done with them, they heartily wished they had never heard of the Petition of Prostitutes!

In 1874 Gladstone resigned. A General Election followed in which the Liberals were defeated, and the Tories returned with a 150 majority in the House. The Repealers felt an even greater grudge against Gladstone for so suddenly dissolving Parliament, leaving them no time to prepare for the campaign. The result of the election they felt to be calamitous to their hopes. The main workers in the Movement were Liberals — Tories, the leading Church dignitaries, the leading medical men being mainly arraigned against them. They felt they had no levers to pull against the Tories and that the very size of the Tory majority would not help to make the Government less complacent.

On June 25th a meeting was held in York. It was far from being optimistic. Abroad as well as at home they saw the whole system growing. However, they decided to campaign on and also to pay attention to building an international movement. It was in the building of this movement that Josephine Butler played an outstanding part and won so well-deserved an international reputation. This, however, lies beyond the scope of this article.

James Stansfeld Joins the Crusade

However 1874 was not only a year of despond. It was the year in which the second most outstanding recruit to the Movement was won.

In July 1874 Stansfeld had already made up his mind to join the movement and became one of its Vice-Presidents. On October 15th, 1874, he was the main speaker at a meeting at Coulston Hall, Bristol. At that meeting he declared:

> "I have put my hand to the plough; I have cast my lot with these men and women . . . and never will I desist, and never will they desist from this sacred agitation until these degrading laws have been blotted out from the Statute Book for ever." [11]

There had been for years a conspiracy of silence in the press. This speech shattered it overnight. *The Times* declared that it regretted "that a statesman of Mr. Stansfeld's eminence should identify himself with such an hysterical crusade". The *Saturday Review* felt that "Governments with real responsibility could not regard life with this primitive straightforwardness".

James Stansfeld was the senior Member for Halifax, which town he represented in Parliament for over thirty years. He was one of the three leading Radicals in the House of Commons. He had held office in the Liberal Government. He knew full well that by taking such a step it was unlikely that the Liberal Party would forgive him, especially Gladstone (in fact when the Liberals did return in 1880 he was not given a Cabinet post). Dilke says that Joseph Chamberlain was given it instead, at his (Dilke's) suggestion.

Stansfeld had originally been in favour of the Acts, but against their extension. What really shook him was the growing and pressing agitation against the Acts by the Repealers. In Halifax:

> "At a crowded and excited meeting in January 1871, one of (his) supporters, who was also a personal friend, Edward Crossley, carried an amendment to a vote of confidence to the effect that the confidence did not extend to his position on the Contagious Diseases Acts."[12]

Perhaps the most astonishing thing of all was that a statesman with his expectation of the fruits of office should take such a step, and, having taken it, should so faithfully keep his promise.

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[11] J. L. and Barbara Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, Longmans, Green & Co. (1932).

[12] op .cit., pp. 183-184.

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He became the Repealers' main spokesman in the House of Commons. He spoke and campaigned throughout the country. He was unsparing in his work despite a deep personal sorrow of his wife's most difficult illness for many years before her death.

The Repealers respected him and the Parliamentary group. They listened attentively to their opinions, they rallied support to them. But the Parliamentary group was never allowed to frame the policy of the Movement. This remained always in the hands of the representatives of the Associations in conference. Above all, success was due to the supreme political skill of Josephine Butler with her unerring instinct to take everything to the people, to explain the issues, to listen to them, to give them confidence to act on their own behalf.

Victory

In 1880, a Liberal Government was returned. The majority of the M.P.s were pledged to repeal the Acts.

To the Repealers it was clear that they had to continue to mount the pressure, to give the Government and M.P.s no rest until the pledges made by the M.P.s became reality.

At the Annual Conference of the Liberal Federation (December 19th, 1882) Professor Stuart was chosen to second the resolution of a vote of confidence in the Liberal Government. As the man who organised Mrs. Butler's first public meeting in Crewe, it was known that he would never have taken such a step unless he and the Repealers were satisfied that the Government were indeed going to Repeal the Acts.

On April 12th, 1883, the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation passed a resolution "that it is desirable that the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864-69 should be repealed without delay".[13]

April 20th, 1883, was the day for which all Repealers had worked and suffered opprobrium, but had never doubted that it would dawn. James Stansfeld stood up in a House of Commons crowded from floor to ceiling. It was a hushed, tensely excited House. He moved "that this House disapproves of the compulsory examination of women under the Contagious Diseases Acts".

The bell rang for the Division Lobby. The results of the Division showed that there were 182 for and 110 against, the majority of seventy-two was cheered with a deafening roar. The compulsory examination of women was the cornerstone of the Acts. With its abolition, the Acts were virtually dead. These ignominious Acts were finally removed on April 15th, 1886, when Royal Assent was given to a Bill abolishing them.

[13] Benjamin Scott, *State Iniquity* . . . pp. 218-220.

What Did the Campaign Achieve?

It lasted just over sixteen years. Its operation had driven many women to despair and one at least (Mrs. Percy of Aldershot) to suicide. It let loose an army of snoopers armed with vicious powers. It is recorded over and over again how men queued outside the examination centres waiting for women to come out so that they could be the first "to go with them" when they had been "cleared" by the doctors, how children played the game of "going to be examined". All this vicious system was now smashed.

Josephine Butler was shown to be a woman of outstanding political ability. There was no politician in Britain of greater political stature.

The two most outstanding merits of the campaign, however, are these.

Firstly, it showed beyond doubt that its success lay in Josephine Butler's understanding that the *working men* of Britain had to be its foundation. It was to the working men she turned above all for support and it was in the industrial North that the main strength of the movement lay. It is unfortunate that this lesson was so little understood by the Suffragettes in later years. And it is indeed a lesson that all progressive movements can only ignore at their peril.

Secondly, the Movement combined in a skilled way work in Parliament and the work of the Movement outside. It was the Movement outside which took precedence and it was this which gave the M.P.s confidence.

It is precisely this lesson which has been so profoundly understood in our Communist Party programme *The British Road to Socialism.*

We should remind ourselves if such a campaign with such an outcome was possible when the Labour movement was so young, how much more is now possible in a situation so entirely different from that of the 1870's and '80's. The proposal for a fundamental change in Britain by the combination of mass action outside of Parliament with action within it is in line with our own history and traditions.

What does music express?

A discussion on the articles and correspondence in *Marxism Today* on the subject *What Does Music Express?* will be held at 16 King Street on Tuesday, July 7th, at 7 p.m., organised by the Music Group of the Communist Party. Alan Bush and Thomas Russell will be taking part. All members of the Communist Party are welcome.

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Discussion Contributions on

Shop Stewards— Past, Present and Future

Hugh Wyper

AN examination of the role and value of the shop stewards is well worth while at this time. The article in the April issue by Denis Goodwin was necessary and comes at a time when the position of stewards is being discussed by a wide variety of people and organisations, from entirely different points of view, of course. The shop stewards have always been the subject of discussion by the employers and the right wing in the Labour movement and they will be more so in the future. The shop stewards will be the main target of all forces of reaction in the immediate period that lies ahead. To make the trade unions impotent is the aim, but this is impossible to achieve unless the stewards can be shackled. How can we make this giant with such potential strength become one with feet of clay? This is the question to which the Government and employers would dearly love to know the answer.

Why the Attacks?

We should be clear on one thing—to limit the activities of the stewards is to clear the way for further moves to attack the working people of this country. In fact, it is to tear the guts from the Trade Union movement as we know it today. The aim of long-term agreements, collaboration on Neddy and N.I.C. would get easy passages if the stewards were "put in their place". Far-sighted trade union leaders, understanding what is involved with automation and new techniques, would be well advised to consider how their stewards can be given greater powers and responsibilities on the job and within the union itself. The most ruthless employers, especially those in the light engineering industries where the goods are mass produced—motor cars, typewriters—are already on the move making the most blatant attacks on the stewards and their committees.

The publicity—usually bad—given to the stewards by the press is in some measure an indication of the importance of their role. However, this usually shows itself in the form of attacking the stewards as "irresponsible", "wildcats", "doing damage to the Labour movement" when the workers inside the factory take decisions to immediately come out on strike. In this regard, it is sufficient to say that those who make these statements know little of workers or have ever been in a responsible position in the factory as a steward or convenor.

If irresponsible stewards exist then they would be the last who could convince the workers to come out on strike. Workers can ill afford to strike and, even with official strikes, it is never accepted as automatic or without question. The lads only come on strike when it is obvious that there is little choice; when they realise that all the negotiations by the stewards have been of no avail and the management intend to dig in. Where full recognition is given to the stewards by the management and respect exists for the workers' representatives then this leads to the problems being sorted out. On the other hand, where the stewards are not consulted and the management act in a high-handed manner, which in many cases is open provocation, then you will get strikes. How else can it be? The Trade Union movement cannot be discussed in a serious fashion without the stewards fitting in to any plan for advance. It is true that some trade union leaders have little regard for shop stewards, but anyone who thinks for a moment cannot fail to admit that the trade unions would have nothing like the membership (100 per cent trade union membership in many establishments is entirely due to the shop steward), influence or finance without the untiring efforts of thousands of stewards who day in and day out carry through the tasks which make the union necessary. The stewards are the salt of the earth.

Living with the Problems

The contribution made by these men and women who accept these unpaid posts is possible only because they live with the problems of their fellow workers. More negotiations take place between the convenor and management of a large factory in one week than most trade union officials

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have in a month. Every day the stewards work to improve the wages and conditions at shop floor level; this is the reason, of course, for the attacks by the employers. The worth of the stewards is best seen in engineering. The wage negotiated nationally by the unions and the employers is £10 12s. for a skilled worker. However, when the employers are rejecting the claim for an increase by the unions they can quote that the average wage for a skilled craftsman within the industry is in the region of £18 per week.

Wages vary a great deal within the industry but, nevertheless, it is true that strong shop steward organisation is responsible for earnings in the factory which are much higher—in some cases 100 per cent higher—than those negotiated by the unions at national level. Every day the battle goes on for prices, higher lieu rates, increases in the basic rates, merit money or something else that the operator feels entitles him to more money. The stewards battle with the rate-fixers, the foremen and higher supervision with the men and women standing by to give the necessary support. It would be wrong to create the impression that this is the position in every factory. On the other hand, in most large factories even the stewards who are sometimes termed as right wing do a first-class job in raising wages and improving conditions.

There is a failure among class-conscious people outside the factories to fully appreciate the difficulties confronting militant shop stewards. They must do their own work efficiently and at the same time try to do numerous other tasks on behalf of the workers. This applies particularly to a convenor of stewards. There is nothing in the National Agreements which makes provisions to allow the stewards time to carry through their duties and, where this does exist, then again all credit goes to the workers and the stewards for demanding that time be allowed. The "boss", of course, knows a good steward when he sees one; tries to win him to play ball but failing that then puts the pressure on by all sorts of devious and dubious methods.

Shop Stewards and Trade Union Life

Denis Goodwin in his article suggests that unions should give greater representation to the stewards on area and district committees and to that there can be little disagreement. However, I find in my experience that most committees, even the reactionary ones at this level, usually have a large number of stewards sitting on these and it is reflected in the decisions taken at higher levels from there on. There is greater need to consider ways and means which can involve more men and women in the life of the trade union itself. This is imperative if we wish to produce more stewards and officials of the calibre necessary to improve and extend trade union organisation.

I believe that the big industrial unions should now move their branches into the factories, particularly the A.E.U., E.T.U., A.U.F.W. and the Boilermakers. The link between the union and the everyday life of the members immediately becomes closer. Not only would the members take a greater interest, but many stewards who are active in the factory but never attend the union branch would, I am sure, begin to play their part in the running of the union. It would not automatically solve the poor attendances at the branch nor do wonders but it is a necessary change as I see things. It could be argued that the T.G.W.U. already have this position of the branch based on the place of work and yet it is weak in many places; this is to be expected in a body which deliberately debars a section of their most class-conscious workers from assisting in the work of the organisation. Of all the industries where the branch is based on the place of work none lends itself more to really making an impact than in engineering.

Trade Union Branches in the Factories?

It is high time that a real attempt was made by the unions to revise many of the agreements which were imposed on the unions by the employers twenty, thirty and in some cases forty years ago. We should be looking at the question of the employers allowing time for the unions to have meetings inside the factories during working hours and paid for it. Why not facilities for a meeting once a fortnight at least to report on matters arising inside the factory and on other union business? Two further points in favour of the trade union branch being located in the factory are:

(a) the young workers would have greater opportunity to take an active interest in trade unionism and would soon realise that they have an important part to play;
(b) financially I believe the unions would be better off and the desire for amalgamation would grow considerably at shop floor level.

In passing it should also be noted that the management's interest in safety really only extends to carrying through the minimum operations that ensure they keep within the law and do not allow themselves to get involved in heavy damages if a worker can prove liability. Production is their main consideration and they resent stewards "interfering with managerial rights" on matters of safety. The unions should be demand-

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ing from the employers that stewards should have the right to stop a machine or any practice which is dangerous until top supervision has examined the complaint and taken a decision. "Managerial rights" are sacred to them but in this day and age the unions can well afford to attack on this front.

Combine Committees

Readers may also express surprise that, in the Trade Union movement, most leaderships oppose stewards from the different factories within the same combine meeting to discuss common problems. One wonders if they do not reflect the feelings of the bosses of the monopolies who really are scared stiff of the stewards in their group getting together. However, as the employers dig in for the struggle, a sure way of making a dent in their front is to tackle the large ones first. In many cases stewards could have already broken through in some of the larger combines in this country if a modicum of support had been forthcoming to the stewards attempting to organise meetings within that group. Undoubtedly, the future will bring the combines' shop stewards' committees forward as the spearhead in forcing concessions from our reluctant bosses.

What happens after the General Election may well demand the greatest efforts by the workers to build and protect their shop stewards' organisation. Without it they are completely at the mercy of the employers in this country. Still I do not believe that we need to concern ourselves too much about the workers' ability to look after themselves in any battle.

What really amazes me is why there is not a greater appreciation of what an asset the stewards are to the Trade Union movement and how much that asset could be increased. A socialist government would realise the potential of these experienced men and women and would harness them to assist in solving the many problems which arise in building socialism. Above all, these stewards guarantee the future of the trade unions and possibly are the key to mobilising the working people in this country behind a socialist government.

Art and Superstructure

David Craig

FOR all the sensitivity and wisdom of his writing, Ernst Fischer seems to me to be ushering in a "Marxist" theory of art whereby not only the name of Marxism may be lost but also its power to make clear distinctions—between decadence and vitality in the arts, between cases of clear social influence on the arts and ones where the shaping effects of society are so buried or devious that they can barely be singled out. His article in the February *Marxism Today* struck me at many points as confused or vague, sometimes in the same way as parts of his *The Necessity of Art* (Pelican, 1963).

Art and Social Life

Fischer is concerned to distance and rarefy the links between art and social life. Several times this leads to mistakes or false emphasis.

> "Each class, each society, each age makes a contribution to the elaboration of the human kind, passes on what it creates to the future. [The shipwreck and return of Odysseus]—these and many other situations in the old myths and their representation in art and literature are as gripping today as they were thousands of years ago. . . . What are transitory are the social character masks—the aristocrat, the plebeian, the bourgeois, the proletarian."

This implies that the subjects and styles of art are classless, and thus that the art of class society, in its various epochs, cannot make any distinctive, lasting contribution that conveys its essence *as* a class society. If this were so, the very many centuries of class society, which have seen the maturing of European art, would have left only a blur as far as distinctive images of themselves were concerned —no memorable images or myths which could continue to grip us *as* renderings of what it has been like to live in a divided society. But this is not the case. Surely the essence of the nineteenth-century novel in English is the image it creates of a swarming new industrial society in which inequality, exploitation, class antagonism, and the alienation of man from man had reached a new pitch of intensity.

Similarly, even the older myths in the British culture tend to be class-conditioned, e.g. the peasant myth of the cutty wren, symbolising the hunting-down of a social tyrant and the dividing up of baronial property; or King Herring, virtually a fertility god, symbolising the abundance of the seas fished by generations of fishermen and their pride in the herring as a noble prey: "'Course, it's a wonder to me, you see, when you pick those fish

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out of the net—brrr! Like that! Vibrant with life . . . They talk to them all the time—'Come on, me darlin's, come on' "; or the coalfield myth of the Big Hewer, known under many different personal names in Derbyshire, Wales, County Durham, symbol of the strength and tirelessness of the ideal miner: "By, he was a big man. Could you imagine? He was eighteen stone. No fat". "No fat. Eighteen stone of *man* . . . Like a machine when he was hewing. You could hear the pick, pick, pick, pick, regular as a clock. Never seemed to tire . . . Whether he was real or purely legendary I never knew even to this day." [1]

Can we call such myths classless, timeless, "universal"? Surely they are soaked in the experiences of men close to the means of production, and created specifically to embody the values and skills by which they lived: thus they are working-class. Fischer aims to detach art from this or that class: "What emerges as permanent, as the meaning, the aim, of all struggles is Man, the universal Man". Here is the arid cipher of the humanists, a weak and featureless theory which ignores changing society and specific conditions—little different from that very popular fallacy which has it that "human nature never changes".

Are Styles Classless?

A related confusion is his point that styles are classless: "*There are no bourgeois or proletarian, no capitalist or socialist forms or means of expression in art or in literature*, but there is socialist *conviction*". Fischer italicises this. It must lie at the heart of his theory. It seems to me plainly mistaken. What are folk songs if they are not the people's (first peasant, then proletarian) own means of expression? They originated in the work of the people (not of the priests or landlords), often they were needed to make that work effective (hauling, rowing or tweed-waulking in unison); or in other cases they originated in rituals peculiar to the people—Robin Hood, the green man, a pagan survival in an officially Christian age, who became identified with the essentially people's resistance to the Norman-aristocratic dynasty.[2] This is not only a matter of content, it permeates the very fibres of style. The folk-song's verbal idiom is highly concrete, it names people, places and tools, it does not consider that if you are "down to earth" you thereby limit or tarnish the emotions.

Folk love-songs can be very specific about love-making, where it happens, how it may fail, what it takes to succeed; whereas the aristocratic love-songs and poems (from the Provençal troubadours through to the Petrarchan sonneteers and their English Tudor imitators) tend to be stylised into remote literary conventions. In this concreteness the folk-song is a flowering of popular speech. Listen to a workman talking: if he is a lively man, every sentence has a living, physical detail in it, with the result that when Charles Parker was making the radio-ballad *Song of a Road* he found there was not much lively material to be got from the white-collar staff; almost all of it had to come from the site workers. And the working people tend to prefer concreteness: "By, I was surprised to find that poetry could be so down to earth. At school we used to get Keats and that—all about *beauty*!" (I am quoting from a North Riding smallholder who had been at a class of mine on the trench poets of 1914-18).

Folk-song is only one example; what I have said applies equally to the vernacular tale, and perhaps also (though here I am outside my field) to epic: epic's loving attention to details of weaponry and craftsmanship seems to me essentially a people's style; and most of the epic singers whom we heard broadcast on the Third Programme last year, in the series on *Living Epic* arranged by A. L. Lloyd, were working-class or peasant-collective farmers and farm girls from Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, Cypriot shepherds, and the like—although this may represent a change from the days when the Homeric epic-singers were employed at the courts of the Aegean princes.

Fischer's confusion about class and style recalls a passage in his *The Necessity of Art* where he wrote:

> "Against the definition of socialist realism as a method or style, the question immediately comes to mind: whose style, whose method? Gorky's or Brecht's? Mayakovsky's or Eluard's? Makarenko's or Aragon's? Sholokhov's or O'Casey's? The methods of these writers are as different as they can be; but a fundamental attitude is common to them all. This new Socialist attitude is the result of the writer's or artist's adopting the historical viewpoint of the working class. . . ." (p. 110).

I cannot discuss all these writers, but amongst those I have read extensively—Gorky, Brecht, Mayakovsky, Sholokhov, and O'Casey—there is indeed a common quality outstanding in their work: each has been a master at turning an idiom or style from vernacular, popular, public sources to new creative effect. Gorky wrote his autobiographies with the improvisation of a vernacular story-teller. Brecht transformed dozens of popular forms and idioms—the blues, the cabaret monologue, the marching song, the speech, the folk-song and ballad, the fairy tale, the peasant calendar. Mayakovsky went to the

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[1] The above quotations are from radio-ballads—*Singing the Fishing* and *The Big Hewer* respectively. A. L. Lloyd has valuable notes on the song of "The Cutty Wren" in *The Singing Englishman* (pp. 7-10) and on the sleeve of the Topic record *Songs of Protest* (Ian Campbell Group).

[2] See Christopher Hill,

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slogan, advertisement, and street-corner speech (so popular in Russia around 1917) for his verse styles. Sholokhov is as vernacular—as trenchant and bawdy—as Burns. O'Casey makes a formal dramatic style out of the eloquence, exaggeration, and wit of Irish speech. Socialist artists have drawn in every conceivable way on the whole oral tradition, often more than on the printed classics—they have done so more intensively and creatively than non-socialist writers—and it would be astonishing if this were not the case. For the socialist writer has to find a medium organically fitted to the lives he is presenting (which means to a great extent working-people's) and, what is more, a medium which working-people can recognise as in some sense their own.

Fischer glosses over all this in the name of "a fundamental attitude" (compare "socialist *conviction*" in the *Marxism Today* piece). I put the question to him: How can fundamental attitude fail to shape style or means of expression?

People and Art

Fischer thus confuses the links between the people and art and, in keeping with this, he is vastly favourable (to the point of backing out of all critical judgement) to that modernist art (Kafka, surrealism, abstractionism, etc.) which Georg Lukács in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1963) rightly classes as products of the "all-pervading fatalistic *Angst* of bourgeois intellectuals" (p. 92). Fischer writes:

> "Whoever ignores the element of *revolt* in expressionism, surrealism, futurism, cubism, constructivism, etc., whoever dismisses them simply as 'fashion', decadence, deformation as a result of imperialism ... will not be able to grasp the problems of modern art and literature."

Certainly nothing should be "dismissed". But Fischer does not seem to leave himself any grounds for distinguishing between incoherent revolt and purposeful, clear-eyed revolt. Brecht, for example, gave in his plays extremely lucid pictures of exploitation, war, class "justice", and the like; and the forms he used were, from the point of view of the old plushy middle-class theatre, revolutionary. As such they have fertilised the best developments in the drama since (in this country, for example, Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* and *Chips with Everything*, and the Joan Littlewood/Charles Chilton *Oh What a Lovely War*) and in doing so have moved the drama nearer to something that ordinary people might conceivably appreciate. By contrast, Kafka (who appears to be the twentieth-century writer whom both Fischer and Lukács *like best*) can perhaps be taken as giving a picture of man confused and hounded by bourgeois authority, by a social machine he now feels utterly alien to himself. But the style Kafka developed for this—the placeless, timeless nightmare with its quality of neurotic obsession that can never be resolved—this has led on, not to vital new kinds of work, but to the increasingly monotonous, repetitive, self-parodying work of Beckett and Pinter. This school of writers should not be "dismissed": their gist, and the reasons for their hold over a section of the public, must be understood, for they indeed typify the impasse of Western society. But we are failing as critics if we pretend that this impasse art is not a distortion, a phase of stultification, in the main line of great art which has been accessible to the mass of people and accepted by them.

Fischer writes acutely about Picasso, and sees the restless complication of styles which mark modern painting as a product of the pace of change in "a dynamic industrial society". Yet the confusions in Western painting and sculpture—the great proportion of oddities, monstrosities, obscure experiments offered as achieved work, and the like—have occurred in *capitalist* industrial society. How has this conditioned art? and how does this affect our opinion of Western art, if as communists we are engaged in fighting capitalism? Fischer is wholly positive and accepting towards modernist art; anything goes. Going by so eclectic a standard (or lack of standard), how could he explain, or even recognise, the fact that the master painter of our time, Picasso, has spent longer periods of doldrums, arid directionless experiment, and evident confusion than any other painter of his stature? and that he got out of one such period *via* a commission to paint a big work for a public place ("Guernica")? It seems that John Berger in his forthcoming Pelican on Picasso is going to emphasise, and try to explain in terms of social isolation, this terribly erratic course that Picasso's art has followed. In another book, the novel *A Painter of Our Time*, John Berger makes his painter-hero blame society for failing to give the artist a subject—a direct, active professional link between painter and community: hence the chaos of abstraction, action painting, surrealism, and the many many other phases in the rudderless voyage of modern art.

I suppose Fischer's confusions arise from his anxiety to avoid "dogmatic Marxism". He writes amidst the cross-currents in Marxist opinion that were set in motion by the twentieth congress of the C.P.S.U. Yet he has been too unsteadied by these events. If his approach became standard, I believe that Marxists concerned with culture could lose their driving-force and their capacity to make a difference in the world of the arts by virtue of their confidence in its social roots. I hope we are not going to vacillate for many more years between "dogmatic Marxism" and the indefinite, eclectic, featureless near-humanism to which Fischer often inclines.

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African Socialism

A. H. Esterson

IN his article on African Socialism (*Marxism Today*, February), Idris Cox shows concern about Fenner Brockway's concept of Socialism. I feel there is rather more cause for concern about some aspects of Mr. Cox's (and the Communist Party's) concept of Socialism.

Idris Cox suggests the following among the basic tenets of socialism:

(a) Common ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, and production for use, and not for private profit.

(b) Political power in the hands of the people, led by the working class and its Marxist party, and based on full democracy in all aspects of economic and social life.

Presumably all socialists would accept (a), but it is worth noting that there is a tendency to equate common ownership with state ownership (it hardly needs saying that they are not necessarily the same by any means), and the latter tends to be promoted as *the* basic tenet of socialism, while (b) in practice receives little more than lip service. This will, of course, be denied by Communists, but does anyone *really* believe that those countries usually accepted as socialist have a system based on "full democracy in all aspects of economic and social life"?

Developments in Ghana

The restriction of such democracy is hidden beneath concepts such as "the people" and "the working class", the use of which by Communists has almost reduced them to a metaphysical status. (Unless, of course, one knows the code: "the people" equals "the working class" equals "Communist Party" equals "Party Leadership".)

I think I can illustrate my point with reference to Ghana. Idris Cox makes it plain (by quoting approvingly from Ghanaian sources, and by the absence of criticism) that he regards Ghana as one of the few African states heading for socialism. But, even on his own terms, it seems clear that Ghana is heading in the opposite direction to one of the "basic tenets" of socialism. As *Peace News* (not unsympathetic to African socialism) has pointed out, there is strong evidence that the recent referendum result was "obtained by widespread intimidation and ballot rigging".

There is certainly ample evidence that Ghana does not "reject dictatorial and despotic methods of government" and is not setting up a state in which "freedom of speech, press, assembly and demonstrations" are ensured, requirement which are included among the most likely steps of a state heading for socialism, in the 1960 Declaration of World Communist Parties.

It is ominous that the Party press frequently fails to report, let alone criticise, many of the more unpleasant developments in Ghana. It would seem that the Party leadership still maintains its paternalistic attitude towards its readers. They apparently cannot be trusted to cope with unpalatable facts.

Returning to Idris Cox's article, Fenner Brockway's view that Marxism-Leninism as applied in Africa is inappropriate cannot be dismissed simply by quoting propaganda statements to the contrary. It is a familiar mistake of Communists to confuse resolutions with reality (e.g. the U.S.S.R. constitution in the 1930's was acclaimed, but the reality was rather different).

I cannot claim to know any details of African economic development, but I wonder whether the emphasis on the role of the working class is as irrelevant in Africa today as it was in China 35 years ago, when there seems little doubt that the orthodox Marxist view had little relation to the realities of the situation. Perhaps Fenner Brockway is thinking on these lines.

Iraq

There is another point which is worthy of attention. In criticising Fenner Brockway's views on the Ba'athists in Iraq, Idris Cox refers to this "fascist gang". It is difficult to believe that in 1964 a serious article can still fall back on the use of such crude terms. But a glance at practically any Communist or official Marxist literature reveals innumerable cliches of this type (albeit more subtle). I have already mentioned how concepts such as "the people" and "the working class" have almost acquired metaphysical status. The extensive use of jargon in practice restricts the development of ideas, because the oversimplification involved often eliminates genuine analysis.

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Moreover, it leads to a tendency to see complex situations in crude terms, and since the jargon often bears little relation to reality, theories are easily extended to cover any eventuality, so that they appear convincing to those who accept the code (often unconsciously).

To summarise the basic points I am trying to raise:

Firstly, in practice the Communist movement pays little attention to the fundamental freedoms which inspired the early Socialists (I suspect that this may be one reason why the Communist movement tends to be so weak in the materially advanced Western countries).

Secondly, with the help of an extensive jargon, orthodox Marxist theory tends to fit reality into its own pattern of ideas, instead of modifying its ideas to fit reality.

A Rejoinder

Idris Cox

IF there is "a tendency to equate common ownership with state ownership" it was certainly not expressed in my article. Nor did it anywhere equate the working class with "the people". On the contrary, it made specific reference to the variable class structures in Africa.

Of course there is always a danger (which everyone must guard against) of "fitting reality into one's own pattern of ideas", but also in attributing statements to others which were never expressed. Putting up "Aunt Sallys" to knock them down is never a helpful method of discussion.

Developments in Ghana

I agree there was no criticism of political trends in Ghana. There is so much of this pouring out from imperialist and anti-socialist circles that I deemed it more useful to concentrate on the positive trends—since confirmed by the provisions of the new Seven-Year Plan.

That there was a high-powered political campaign to get a maximum of "YES" votes in the referendum is not surprising. But *Peace News*' accusation of "widespread intimidation and ballot-rigging" is simply ludicrous.

The only "evidence" I have seen was in a report in the *Guardian* (3.2.64.) that: "Each voter's name was printed against a serial number on the voting registers, and this number was written at the polling booth on the counterfoil of his voting slip." As this is *precisely* the method adopted in Britain, I suppose we must have taught the Ghanaians how to do it!

This does not mean that Ghana has achieved complete democracy. It has not even built the economic foundations of socialism, though the new Seven-Year Plan aims to achieve this by 1970. Even so, there are greater opportunities in Ghana for democratic expression than exist in most of the other independent African States. But, even in its present stage, it is certainly vastly superior to the situation in Britain, where the commanding heights of the economy, as well as the ideological weapons—press, radio, television—are dominated by big business and monopoly.

Iraq

No Marxist would argue that African countries will inevitably travel on precisely the same road to socialism as did the Soviet Union. My article warned precisely against this. But this does not mean we must wait for the working class to become a majority of the population before it becomes the vanguard of the fight for socialism.

Socialism is not a matter of words. It is a scientific conception of society which has to be fought for, with the working class in the leading position. The failure to recognise this explains Mr. Brockway's naive acceptance of the Ba'athist profession of socialism in words, while acting as tools of imperialism. Even President Nasser denounced them as "a fascist gang". To Mr. Brockway's credit he was courageous enough to change his views after the overwhelming evidence of the tortures and mass murders in Iraq, and has since voiced his opposition in words and deeds. One hopes that Mr. Esterson is also willing to be convinced by new evidence.

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Alienation Under Socialism

Judith Cohen

DR. LEWIS'S article in January's *Marxism Today* was a very clear and illuminating account of the origin and development of alienation in modern capitalist society, but left me still doubtful over the problems of achieving freedom from alienation under socialism.

One can understand only too well alienation in the capitalist world, but it is difficult to grasp how alienation can be completely overcome in an advanced industrial society, even when that society is socialist. Merely changing the relations of production cannot really alter the effect of automation. Although the society is humanised the productive techniques surely remain as impersonal and as intimidating as under capitalism. Is it not simplifying things too much to say that since under a socialist society the goods are produced according to the needs of that society instead of for profit, and that each member of that society can feel he has some control over the production of these goods, and that there is some meaning in his work—that this will overcome alienation? It is much too abstract and theoretical to argue that by bringing the relations of production into line with the requirements of the developed productive forces you will have established a human basis for society and removed alienation. Why is it claimed that under socialism the factory worker is no longer alienated? Is fitting nuts and bolts in a Soviet factory any less soul destroying than in a Western factory? Surely the fact that the worker is not being exploited under socialism does not alter the other tyrannies under which he necessarily labours in any modern factory.

However, perhaps we, under capitalism, subjectively conscious of the contradictions of that society in feelings of alienation from one another and from society in general, can overemphasise the power and tenacity of alienation—which is after all not a concomitant of advanced industrial society *regardless* of the social relations of that society, but is the affective manner in which we become conscious of the barriers erected by capitalist society to full human development in the economic and therefore emotional and ideological fields.

Participation and Control

Perhaps the basic reason why advanced industrial society need not cause alienation under socialism lies in the difference of the *whole* life of the worker under socialism and under capitalism —a difference which cannot be too greatly emphasised. Under capitalism the worker has no control over society whatsoever: his working life is constantly dominated by fears of recession, dismissal, redundancies and unemployment. He himself becomes completely subject to the fluctuations of an impersonal market. It is this utter lack of control and security, this complete absence of identity and participation, which gives rise to alienation under capitalism.

Under socialism, however monotonous the work, the worker's greater sense of participation, the conscious role he plays in the running of society, plus the fact that, increasingly with the development of socialism, the worker realises that his interests are at one with those of the society he lives in—all this must to a large extent eliminate the alienating effects of large-scale automation.

Neither should it be forgotten that it is only under socialism, and finally communism, that the powers of automation can be fully used to shorten the working day and relieve men of the more soul destroying aspects of industrial work.

New Human Relations

But perhaps the main reason why alienation can be overcome under socialism is that human relations are no longer those of hard cash, as under capitalism—"relations emptied of tenderness" as Caudwell expresses it. The relations that bind shareholder to wage employee, civil servant to tax payer and all men to an impersonal market —with the abolition of exploitation and profit as the driving force of society, these relations can become those of comradeship, of love between men—relations expressing not monetary or property qualifications, but a united and common interest in society.

Perhaps these points can be seen as factors in the elimination of alienation under socialism. I should be interested to know how other comrades feel about this.

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STEWARTIE

Robert Bonnar

At the end of June we are publishing a new novel, STEWARTIE, the scene of which is set on the railway in Fife.

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The price of this novel is 21s. If you don't buy it, make sure to put it in your library list.

Meantime, we are preparing some interesting books for the summer and autumn: *William Morris, the Man and the Myth,* by R. Page Arnot; *Economics for Trade Unionists,* by Sam Aaronovitch; *The Central Labour College,* 1909-29, by W. W. Craik; *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations,* by Karl Marx, with an Introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm; *The Internationale,* by R. Palme Dutt; and *My Life with the Miners,* by Abe Moffat.

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